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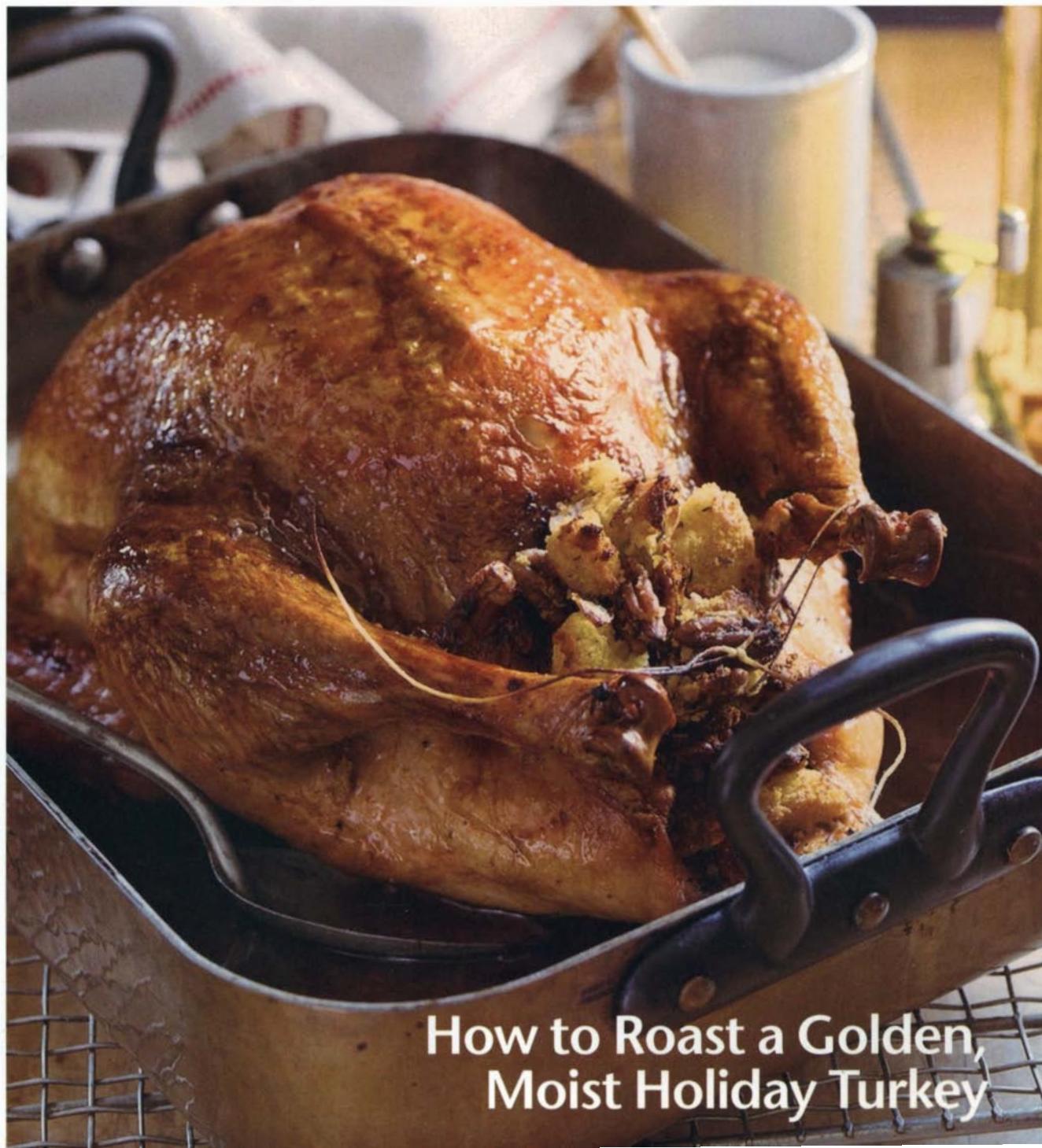
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1 center loin pork roast (4-5 lbs), chine bone removed (trim excess fat from loin and all extra meat from rib bones, or ask your butcher to "French" the bones for you)

2 cloves garlic, peeled

Coarsely ground pepper

Cut garlic cloves in half, and rub over all surfaces of loin; sprinkle generously with black pepper. Place in preheated 350°F oven, with bones up, on rack in shallow roasting pan. Roast 1-1 1/2 hours, (about 18-20 minutes per lb.) until meat thermometer placed in center of loin eye reads about 155°F. Remove from oven, let rest 10 minutes. Cut between rib bones to serve. Serves 6.

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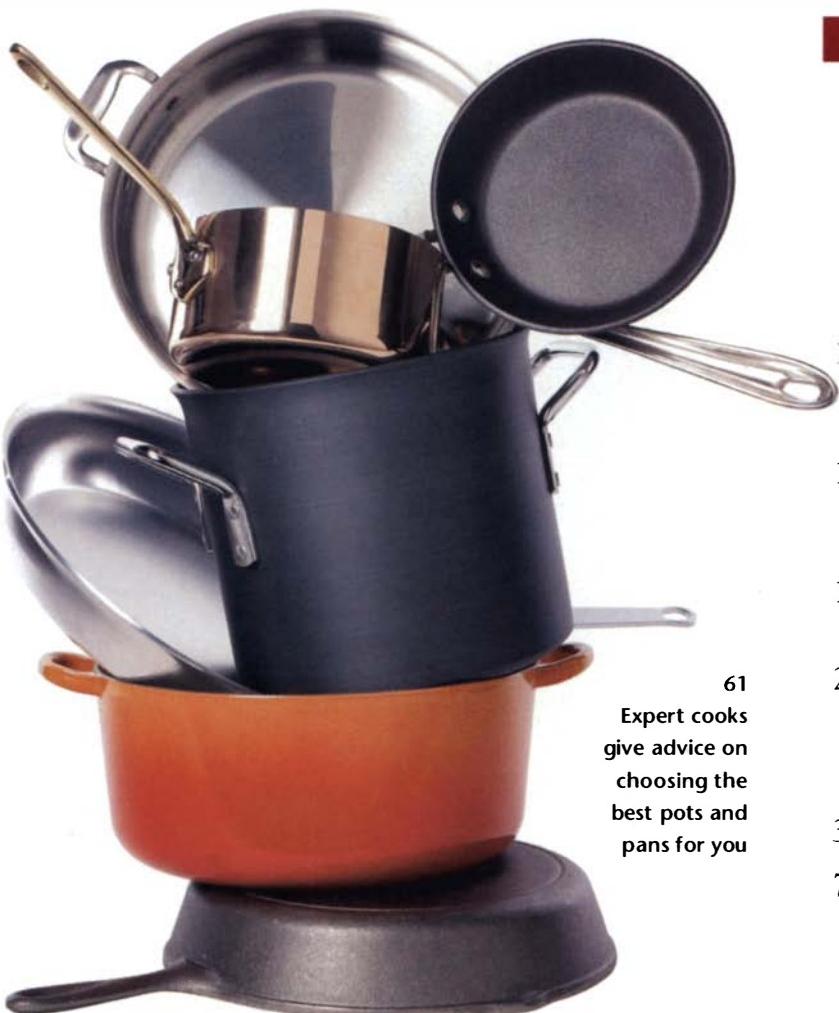
44

Lemon-curd cookies are one of five fabulous desserts to make for a relaxed holiday party



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DECEMBER 1996/JANUARY 1997 ISSUE 18

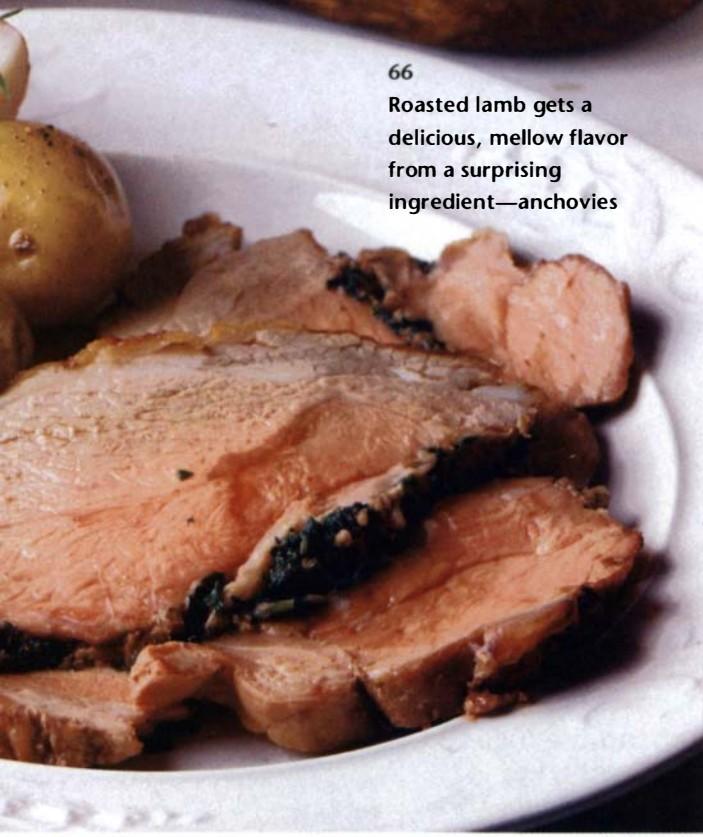


61
Expert cooks give advice on choosing the best pots and pans for you

DEPARTMENTS

- 6 Letters
- 8 Q&A Cutting vs. pressing garlic; coatings on organic produce; Bourbon vanilla
- 12 At the Market A passion for mushrooms
- 16 Notes Nonstick baking sheet liners; truffle butter
- 18 Technique Class Carving a turkey
- 22 Kitchens for Cooks Refrigerators: what's new and what's best for you
- 30 Tips
- 76 Basics Starting dough in a well; chilling food in an ice bath
- 78 Food Science Avoid common cooking problems by controlling enzymes
- 80 Flavorings The allure of cinnamon
- 84 Reviews Cookbooks for today's vegetable renaissance
- 87 Advertiser Index
- 88 Calendar
- 95 Recipe & Technique Index
- 95 Nutrition Information
- 96 1996 Index
- 102 Tidbits
- 104 Artisan Foods Handcrafting chocolate candies

Roasted lamb gets a delicious, mellow flavor from a surprising ingredient—anchovies



ARTICLES

32 Roasting Your Holiday Bird

by Larry Forgione

Get crisp skin, moist meat, and savory pan juices with a two-step roasting method for turkey, duck, or goose

38 Traditional Southern Stuffings

by Scott Peacock

Nutty cornbread or mellow rice serves as a base for two perfect complements to roasted poultry

40 Slow Cooking Enhances Winter Vegetables

by Jody Adams

A low oven temperature and plenty of time produce vegetable dishes with meltingly tender textures and loads of flavor

44 A Dessert Buffet for a Relaxed Party

by Nancy Silverton

This make-ahead menu balances sweet flavors with savory accents

Make the flakiest, butteriest sticky buns by using croissant dough.

51 Fruit Salsas that Sparkle

by Abigail Johnson Dodge

Use your grocer's produce section as a rich resource for vibrant, homemade holiday gifts

54 A Perfectly Baked Potato

by Molly Stevens

Piercing the outside before baking ensures a fluffy inside

56 One Stock Makes Three Flavorful Fish Stews

by Katherine Alford

Mastering the fish-stock base lets you easily make a creamy chowder, a tangy salmon soup, or a hot and spicy court bouillon

61 Choosing Pots and Pans to Improve Your Cooking

by Amy Albert

A few well-chosen pieces—starting with a good stockpot and a heavy sauté pan---can make a big difference

66 Bold or Mellow, Anchovies Add Mediterranean Flavor

by Paul Bertolli

Surprisingly subtle or lively and pungent, the taste of an anchovy depends on how you use it

70 Master Class: Flaky, Buttery Sticky Buns

by Kathleen Stewart

Chilled croissant dough makes these pastries better than any cinnamon roll you've ever tasted

On the cover: Roast Turkey, "Roasting Your Holiday Bird," p. 32.

Cover photo, Alan Richardson. These pages: top left, Rita Maas; bottom left: Boyd Hagen; above, Brian Hagiwara; below, Holly Stewart.



If you'd like to share your thoughts on topics like genetically engineered tomatoes, our most recent baking article, or your food and cooking philosophies, here's the place to do so.

Send your comments to Letters, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.



Fine Cooking welcomes article proposals from our readers. We acknowledge all submissions, return those we can't use, and pay for articles we publish. Send proposals to Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

Low, slow barbecue not the only way to go

Fine Cooking #15 was a great issue, as always. In reference to the barbecue article (p. 36), in which author Scott Howell says that barbecue must be cooked slowly at a low temperature: we have a wood-burner that operates at 500° to 700°F and cooks great barbecue. Low and slow ain't always the way to go.

For roasted corn, we don't turn down the shucks and pull silk. Why lose that flavor producer? Just soak in cold water (the colder, the better) and throw in the cooker. When done, pull the shucks back and use as a handle. One pass with a paper napkin and the silk is gone. Slather on the butter, salt, and pepper and enjoy.

—Charles Renaud
(via e-mail)

Shortbread almost as good as in Scotland

As a Scottish farmer's daughter, I felt obliged to comment on Carole Bloom's article on shortbread (*Fine Cooking* #14, p. 46). My mother's shortbread was "to die for." She'd cream the sugar and butter (cool from a limestone slab in the dairy) with a wooden spoon and bake it in her Esse cooker, which was either raging hot or freezing cold, according to the vagaries of the wind.

I could never make shortbread like hers until I got a food processor. To combat the heat in my adopted home of Texas, I use frozen butter, cut it into chunks, and add it to the processor with the other ingredients. When the mixture starts to hold together, I empty

it onto my lightly floured wooden board, roll the dough wafer thin, cut it with a cookie cutter, and bake at 300°F until pale gold. My shortbread always receives rave reviews.

I disagree with Ms. Bloom's contention that the cookies are best eaten freshly baked. I've always found that they taste better the next day, as the flavors mature.

—Mrs. D. M. Bassett,
Austin, TX

Are cheap tile baking stones lead-free?

I'm writing about the tip in *Fine Cooking* #16, p. 26, on using an unglazed ceramic tile from a home improvement store as a baking stone. Sounds good, but I wonder if the tiles are lead-free. Many tiles from Mexico and China contain lead. I'd like to try this tip, but I'm concerned about any lead hazard.

—Norma M. Pappas,
Chandler, AZ

Editors' reply: You don't have to worry about lead if you buy American-made tiles, which are all lead-free, per government regulations. Two brands to look for are American Oleon and Summitville. ♦

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Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, and we'll try to find a cooking professional with the answer.

What's that coating on organic produce?

Is my supermarket ripping me off? When I washed oranges that had been labeled "organically grown," I saw that the peel was coated with a white substance that could be scraped off with a knife. Is this natural wax, natural oil from the peel, or are organic oranges waxed like all the nonorganic fruits?

—Susan Asanovic,
Wilton, CT

Bill Fujimoto replies: The white spots you see are bits of water-soluble wax, which you'll find on all oranges, and a lot of other fruit, organic or

not. On organic produce, organic wax is always used. The water-soluble coating, a must for all citrus shippers, serves two purposes. It brings out the shine and color of the peel, and it protects the skin from attracting fungus and from drying out. This surface treatment is used on other fruits as well. None of the wax, organic or nonorganic, is harmful, and it washes off easily. But because a fruit's surface is porous, minuscule amounts of wax will remain, even after washing.

Bill Fujimoto is owner of Monterey Foods, an organic produce market in Berkeley, California.

face rust. The only way you can prevent your pans from future rusting is by drying them thoroughly after they've been washed with soap and hot water.

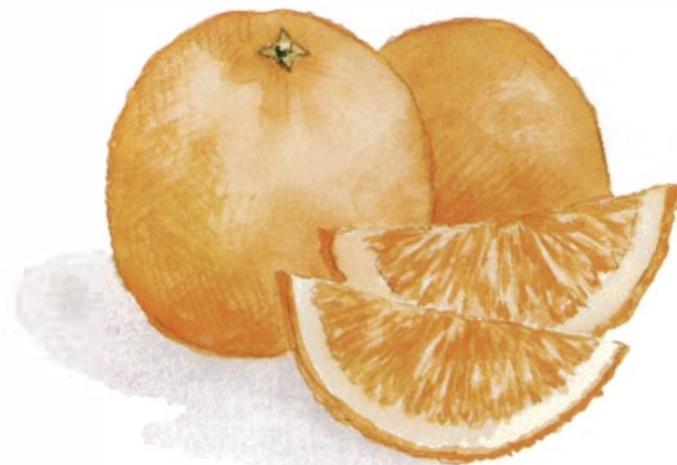
Jean Tibbetts is co-author of *The Well-Tooled Kitchen* (William Morrow, 1991).

Does the way you cut garlic make a difference?

Why do recipes sometimes tell you to chop garlic and other times to squash it with a garlic press or the flat side of a knife? Is there a difference?

—Mark Ahlstrom,
DeKalb, IL

Molly Stevens replies: Yes. Garlic contains some very volatile oils that are released when it's crushed or pressed. As garlic's cell walls are smashed, its oils react with its natural enzymes, and the smell and taste become exceedingly strong. If used immediately in raw preparations, the pungent pulp and extracted juices from pressed or puréed garlic give your dish a pronounced spicy flavor. Unfortunately, these oils don't last but turn rancid quickly and linger on hands,



Organic oranges are coated with an organic, water-soluble wax.

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Q&A

breath, and cutting surfaces. Pressed garlic doesn't hold up well when heated, either. It turns bitter and quickly loses its characteristic garlic flavor.

When you mince or chop garlic, the oils aren't violently forced out but are left to slowly season your food as it cooks. Also, the enzymes that make garlic pungent are destroyed by heat, so the garlic flavor is more apt to mellow as it cooks.

In general, the longer the cooking time, the larger you can leave the pieces of garlic. Finely minced garlic may also be used in vinaigrettes and salsas where the high acidity of the food will help break down the garlic and bring out its flavors.

As a rule, the more aggressively garlic is handled, the

more aggressive and short-lived its flavor.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*.

What is Bourbon vanilla?

The vanilla beans in my pantry are labeled "pure Bourbon vanilla." When does plain vanilla become Bourbon?

—Peter Arnold,
Woodbury, CT

Ari Weinzweig replies:

"Plain vanilla" is something of a contradiction. Real vanilla is one of the most complex flavors in the world, with more than 250 different flavor components. "Pure Bourbon vanilla" refers to vanilla beans grown and cured on the Bourbon Islands in the Indian Ocean. The islands—

Madagascar, Comoro, and Réunion—are known for producing some of the world's most flavorful vanilla.

Vanilla beans are actually the pod of a variety of orchid



that's native to Mexico. To bring out the flavor we know and love, just-picked ripe Bourbon vanilla beans are dipped into near-boiling water and then laid out on wool blankets in the equatorial sun to bake until they're too hot to touch. At night, the beans are wrapped in the

blankets and moved indoors to sweat all night. This process goes on for weeks until the beans turn black and aromatic; then they're ready to use.

Ari Weinzweig is owner of Zingerman's Delicatessen in Ann Arbor, Michigan. ♦



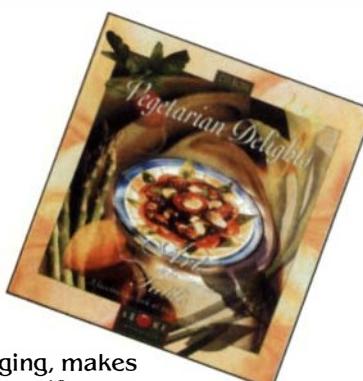
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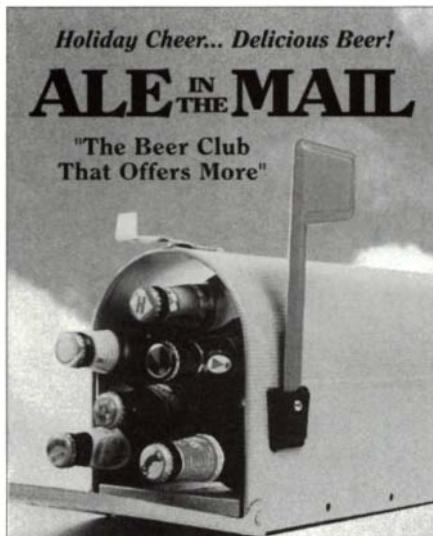
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A Passion for Mushrooms

When my father would suddenly screech to a stop on a busy highway, it didn't mean that he had been cut off by a semi, but that he'd sighted mushrooms growing in the woods alongside the road.

My family's passion for mushrooms is the legacy of my father, who taught me to forage in

the same woods where he later hunted with my son.

But it isn't necessary to risk a car accident or even tramp through the forest on a rainy day to find wild mushrooms. Supermarkets and specialty produce stores now carry a wide variety of mushrooms, both cultivated and foraged.

Mushrooms wild and tame. Truly wild mushrooms have stubbornly resisted most attempts at cultivation and depend exclusively on the whims of nature. But there

are many other interesting mushrooms, which I call "domestic exotics," that are commercially grown.

Pick them fresh and keep them fresh. Whether your mushrooms are wild or cultivated, choose those that are firm and slightly moist with no signs of decay. They should have a woodsy scent and look fresh and alive. The best ones will feel heavy for their size.

Warm air and water will cause mushrooms to decay, so



Button mushrooms (cultivated) are somewhat nutty and creamy when

raw and become earthy and rich when cooked. Use them in soups, stews, and pasta sauces, or sauté some with butter and a little garlic to serve over a grilled steak.



Porcini (wild) have pale, silken flesh and a gloriously meaty texture. They are wonderful when slowly braised or added to a risotto, and I know of no better mushroom for grilling. The heady aroma of grilled porcini caps topped with Parmesan cheese sends my senses soaring. Look for them in summer, spring, and fall.



Chanterelles (wild) have a distinct apricot-like flavor and are one of the few mushrooms that can be paired with acidic ingredients without losing their flavor. I like to serve them with game or shellfish. They're in season early summer through early winter.



Portabella mushrooms (cultivated) are simply cremini grown to gargantuan proportions. Their flesh is denser and usually more fibrous. Grilling and roasting intensify portabellas' flavor and are my favorite ways to cook them.



Cremini (cultivated) are a darker variety of the standard button mushroom; they're firmer with a more intense flavor. Use them in risotto or braise them in a bit of cream to make a simple pasta sauce.

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JoAnna Lund's *Healthy Exchanges Food Newsletter* is a 12-page monthly publication full of "common folk" healthy recipes low in fat, sugar, calories and sodium. Yearly subscription rate: \$26.50. Sample issue: \$2.50. Healthy Exchanges, PO Box 124-FC, DeWitt, IA 52742-0124. (319) 659-8234 or (800) 766-8961.

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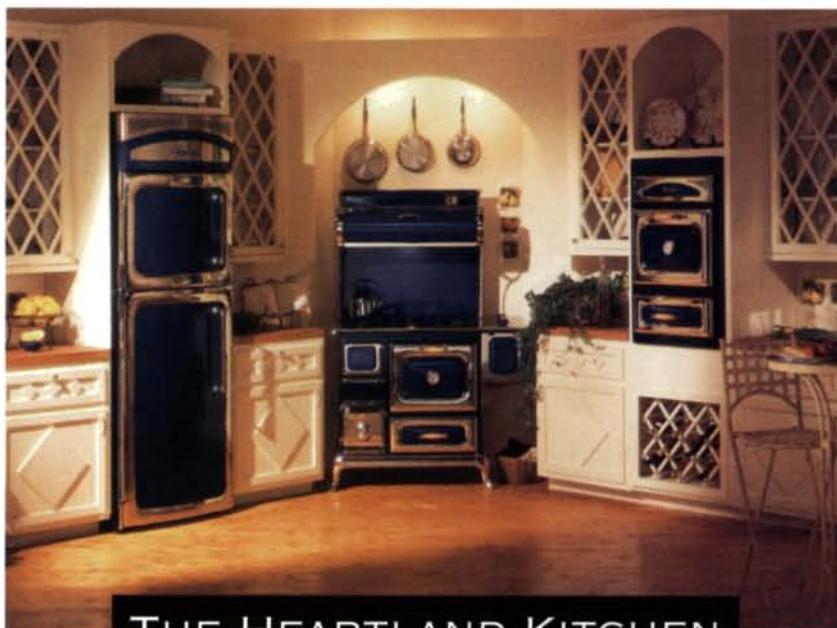
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them until you're ready to use them. They should last four to five days.

Cleaning mushrooms. Begin by trimming the stem, where there's usually a concentration of dirt from the forest floor. Don't actually wash the mushrooms, which can make them soggy, but instead wipe them clean with a damp cloth or scrape them with a paring knife. Those little mushroom brushes are great for cleaning your nails, but not much good for getting the dirt off your mushrooms. Don't hesitate to quickly rinse off any stubborn bits of dirt,

but if you do, cook the mushrooms immediately after or they'll start to decay.

Cook fresh mushrooms to release their liquid. Some mushrooms can be eaten raw, but most should be thoroughly cooked; many mushrooms, particularly wild ones, have proteins that can be difficult to digest unless thoroughly cooked.

A fresh mushroom is mostly water. The good news is that the water contains a high concentration of flavor. When you cook mushrooms, cook them long enough so that all their water is released and

then keep cooking them until the liquid has evaporated. The flavors will become concentrated and the textures slightly crisp, not slippery.

When seasoning mushrooms, be subtle. The flavors of different mushrooms themselves can be easily overwhelmed. Garlic and mushrooms are a great combination, but garlicky mushrooms all taste the same. Go easy with acidic ingredients, such as vinegar, wine, and lemon juice. While they may enhance the overall flavor of a dish, they tend to diminish the taste of the

mushrooms themselves. This doesn't mean that you should never season mushrooms with garlic or acids, only that you should be aware of what effect such an ingredient will have on the mushrooms' flavor.

Jack Czarnecki is the author of *A Cook's Book of Mushrooms* (Artisan, 1995) and the third-generation proprietor of Joe's Restaurant in Reading, Pennsylvania. ♦



Shiitakes (cultivated)

have a distinct, slightly smoky flavor that adapts well to other strong flavors. They're commonly used in Asian cooking and can be enjoyed raw or cooked. Shiitake stems tend to be fibrous, so unless the mushrooms are young and tender, don't eat them.



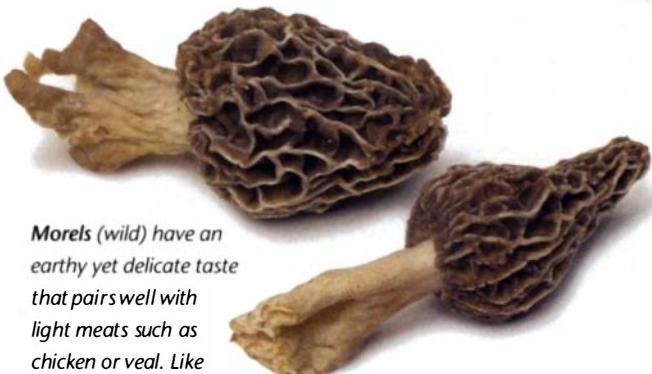
Black trumpets

(wild) are a type of chanterelle with a buttery, woodsy flavor; they're among my favorite mushrooms. I like to bake them in gratins or toss them with pasta. Look for them from early summer to early winter.



Oyster mushrooms (cultivated)

have a subtle flavor that's best paired with other simple ingredients. Sauté them lightly to serve with poultry or fish, or combine them with pasta, polenta, or rice.



Morels (wild) have an earthy yet delicate taste that pairs well with light meats such as chicken or veal. Like most mushrooms, morels love butter, cream, and grains such as rice and polenta. Look for them from early spring to July.



Enoki mushrooms

(cultivated) look like white bobby pins. I like them raw in salads or as a garnish for soups. They have a mild, pleasant flavor that isn't particularly distinctive.

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Left to right: Roxy is sporting Southwestern pants and hat, Hansi is in Baker's Dozen pants, and Gina is decked out in White Chili Pepper pants and toque.

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The look that cooks!

Make baking easier with nonstick liners

I love to bake, but there are a couple of baking-related chores I can do without—greasing my pans and cleaning them afterward. Lining my pans with kitchen parchment helped, but I hated throwing away this rather costly product after every use.

Now there's a perfect solution: reusable baking sheet liners. Treated with a non-stick coating, these thin, flex-



No grease needed. Baked goods slide off these reusable sheets.

ible sheets eliminate the need for greasing. After I slide my cookies, scones, or breads off the sheets, I simply wipe them clean or wash them in soapy water. The sheets then roll up for easy storage.

The liners come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and prices. I recently put a few brands to the test by baking delicate lace cookies. All performed well. The liners stayed flat on my pans, and the cookies came off easily. All stood up to repeated use, and none

seemed to affect baking time or temperature.

The newest of these liners comes from DuPont, which recently introduced its Teflon Bakeware Liners in several sizes. A 10x15-inch sheet costs \$4.95; two 11x17-inch liners are \$8.95. DuPont also offers a package of six liners, including two 9-inch round cake pan liners, for about \$20. You can find them at gourmet food stores and kitchen shops across the country. To find the store nearest you, call DuPont at 800/986-2857.

The King Arthur Flour Baker's Catalogue carries a German-made liner that's 15½x23½ inches; it can be cut to fit any size baking pan. To order the sheet, which costs \$11.95, call 800/827-6836. A 17x20-inch liner by Backflon feels thinner but costs only \$4.95. It's available from Sur la Table (800/243-0852).

Finally, for the serious baker whose oven can accommodate larger sheet pans, there's a thick nonstick mat that has long been used by professional chefs in France. Made of a woven silicon fiber, it's more substantial than the thinner liners and can withstand at least 2,000 uses, according to its manufacturer. But because its edges are sealed, cutting the mat to fit your pans is not recommended. It costs \$29.95 and is also available through Sur la Table.

Judy Monroe is a food and health writer based in St. Paul, Minnesota. A former cooking instructor, she has co-written three cookbooks.

Tempting truffle butter

If I had my way, I'd always have fresh truffles on hand, but their high cost and limited season make this impossible. I happen to think that canned truffles are a waste of money, but the black truffle butter imported by Urbani Truffles (which also imports the truffles themselves from Italy and France) is another story. It has recently become my secret "convenience" food.

The butter is so delicious and so versatile that I keep a container in my freezer to always have some on hand. Now when I don't know what to

Toss some angel hair pasta with a little truffle butter for a quick but indulgent meal.

cook, I toss some angel hair pasta with a little of the butter for a quick but indulgent meal.

At about \$5 for a 2-ounce container, the butter seems a rather extravagant purchase, but it's so intensely aromatic and flavorful that a little goes a long way. In fact, I often cut it with regular unsalted butter to stretch it—when I make truffle-flavored mashed potatoes, for example. Whisked into pan juices, the butter makes an easy sauce that transforms a simple dish into something quite refined.

You can order the truffle butter from Urbani (718/392-



Truffle butter is so intense you can blend it with regular butter. Freeze some to keep it on hand.

5050). Urbani owns a small café in New York City called Terramare that stocks a full line of the company's products. The butter is also available at some gourmet shops. *Judith Sutton is a food writer based in New York City. She has worked as a cook and pastry chef at several New York City restaurants.*

A center for promoting better bread

You could say the folks behind the new National Baking Center in Minneapolis want better bread. The Center's goal is to educate bakers in traditional methods so that more American bakeries can offer high-quality baked goods.

The Center, created in association with the Bread Bakers Guild, the Retailer's Bakery Association, and the Dunwoody Institute, features a theater-style demonstration bakery as well as workshop, lab, classroom, and office space. Seminars and classes are geared to professional bakers and enthusiasts alike. For more information, call 612/374-3303.

Joanne Smart is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



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Steady your bird with a fork, but try not to stab it or it will lose precious juices. Begin by cutting through the crispy skin that connects the thigh and the breast.

Start by removing the legs and carving the dark meat



Slice down and back to where the thigh attaches to the bird. Bend the thigh away from the breast. Slice down through the joint to separate the leg, twisting the knife a little until the leg comes off.



Move the thigh to the cutting board, skin side up with the knee facing you, and cut through the joint that separates the drumstick from the rest of the leg. (The joint is always a bit further into the drumstick than you think.) Separate the two.



Cut the thigh meat away in strips by sliding the knife along the side of the large thigh section parallel to the bone. Slice the drumstick (see p. 20) or serve it whole.

Carving a Turkey

When it comes time to carve a turkey, most of us are a little shaky. The temptation is to hide in the kitchen and do the carving out of sight. This year, go the Norman Rockwell route and perform the ritual in front of your guests. The following will help you keep a steady hand.

Although we're demonstrating the technique on a 15-pound turkey, the principles can be applied to any big bird (see "Roasting Your Holiday Bird," p. 32).

GIVE YOURSELF ROOM AND THINK AHEAD

You need enough space for your bird, the cutting board, and a platter or a stack of dinner plates. If your table is cramped, set up a separate carving station; a small but sturdy folding table covered

with a tablecloth works well.

When trying to make the carving of the turkey look graceful, it helps to have all your props—the cutting board, platter, carving knife, and fork—handy.

You need a cutting board that's large enough to carve the thigh. A well around the edge of the board will catch the juices so they won't ruin your tablecloth. Otherwise, lay a towel under the board to soak up any stray liquid.

Use a long carving knife or a chef's knife. Most important is that the knife be sharp—something to check well before you plan to start. A large fork helps keep the bird in place, but a regular-size fork will do in a pinch.

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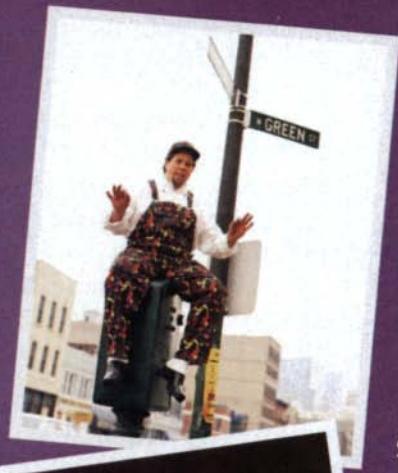
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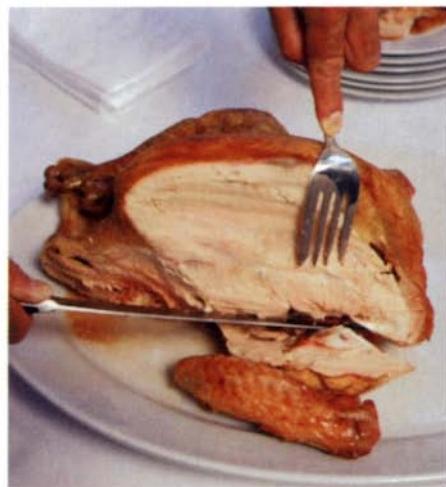
A horizontal cut makes slicing the breast easy



Make a horizontal cut just above the wing, straight into the turkey as far as you can go. This cut allows the breast meat to fall from the bird as you slice.



Slice the breast meat on the diagonal, parallel to the breastbone. Hold the fork against the breastbone as you carve the slices. Lift off each slice, holding it between the knife and fork. Continue carving until you've sliced all the meat from one side.



Cut into the joint above the wing to remove it. Or leave it on for now—it helps stabilize the turkey on the platter. Repeat the carving on the other side of the bird.

oven to the table is your first challenge, but at least you can do this without an audience. To get a turkey out of its roasting pan, stick the handle of a thick wooden spoon in the large cavity between the stuffing (if your bird is stuffed) and the underside of the breastbone and lift the turkey straight up and out of the pan. If your turkey is very heavy, have someone help you move it to the platter by holding the turkey on both sides with kitchen towels.

After the turkey has had a rest of about half an hour, march it proudly but carefully (turkeys have an annoying habit of sliding around on the platter) into the dining room.

BEGIN WITH THE THIGH

To begin carving, steady the bird by pressing against the breast meat with the curved part of the fork's tines. Try not to poke the breast with the tines or you'll let the juices escape, but if you're having trouble keeping the bird still,

go ahead and stab it—a little lost juice is better than a bird sliding onto someone's lap.

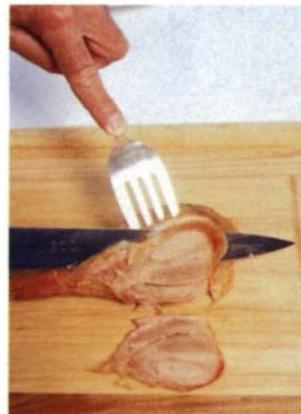
Cut the thigh away from the bird following the steps in the photos on p. 18. Strive to

keep as much meat as you can with the thigh; leave as little as possible on the bird's back.

Usually there's someone who will want the drumstick whole, which lets you off the

hook for carving it. If not, carve it in the same way as the rest of the thigh, or save it for leftovers. (The meat from the drumstick isn't as moist as the meat from the thigh.)

If you choose to carve the drumstick and wing...



Cut slices off the drumstick parallel to the bone. Turn the leg onto its cut side to steady it and carve another slice or two. Repeat, turning the drumstick until all four sides are carved.



Cut the wing in two and carve slices off the meaty section. Save the wing tip to nosh on later, or feed it to the cat.

CARVING THE BREAST IS THE EASY PART

The trick to having the white meat fall away from the bird in attractive slices is to make a deep horizontal cut straight into the turkey just above the wing (see the photo above left). Then, as you carve away from the cavity toward the wing, the slices will fall away from the bird onto the platter.

Don't carve more than you need for first helpings. It's better to carve again when it's time for seconds because the meat will stay moister and warmer on the turkey than it will on a serving dish.

James Peterson, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, teaches cooking across the country. His latest book is Fish & Shellfish (William Morrow, 1996). ♦

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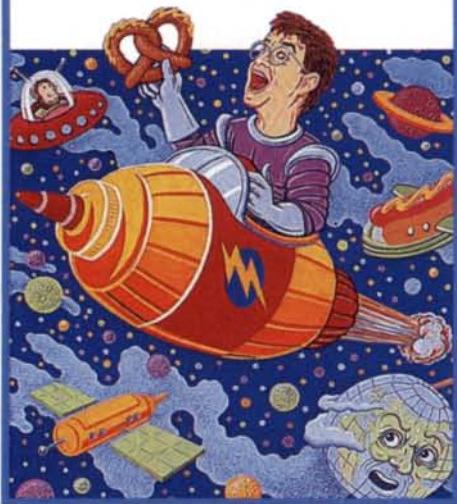
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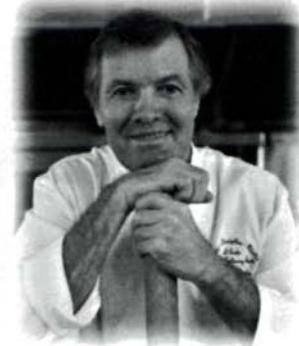
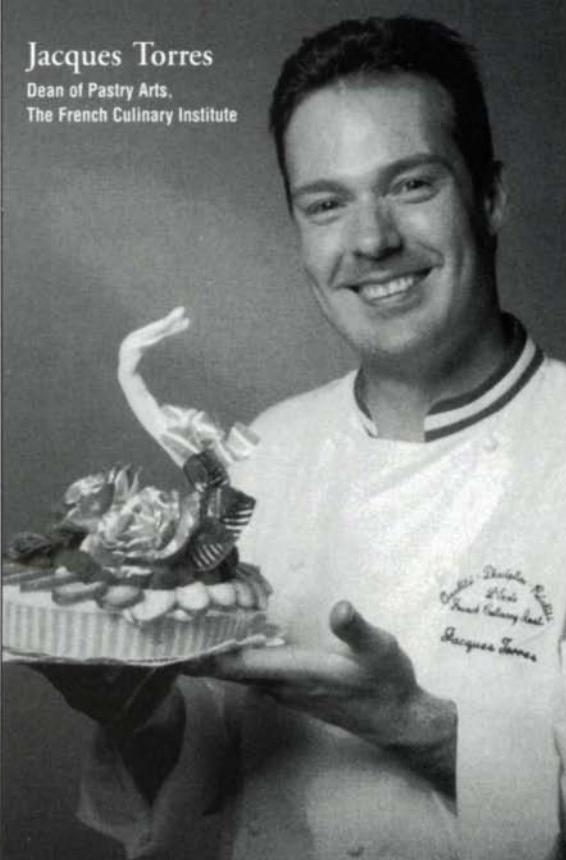
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Refrigerators—what's new and what's best for you

It's time to replace that behemoth in the kitchen—the refrigerator—and chances are it's been a long time since you've had to buy one. You have a lot of choices to make because there are lots of models on the market. To keep your decision-making on track, step back, take a broad view of your life in the kitchen, and then zoom in on the details.

You first need to consider how much refrigerator and freezer space you need. From there, you'll choose among the three available fridge-to-freezer configurations, decide between a freestanding or a built-in refrigerator, pick the options that will make food storage more efficient, and, of course, figure out how much money you want to spend.

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU SHOP AND COOK

To pick a refrigerator with enough capacity to meet your household needs, consider how you shop and cook. Manufacturers list capacity in cubic feet, and full-sized refrigerators range from about 18 to 30 cubic feet. But more cubic feet isn't necessarily better—what's as important as actual volume is

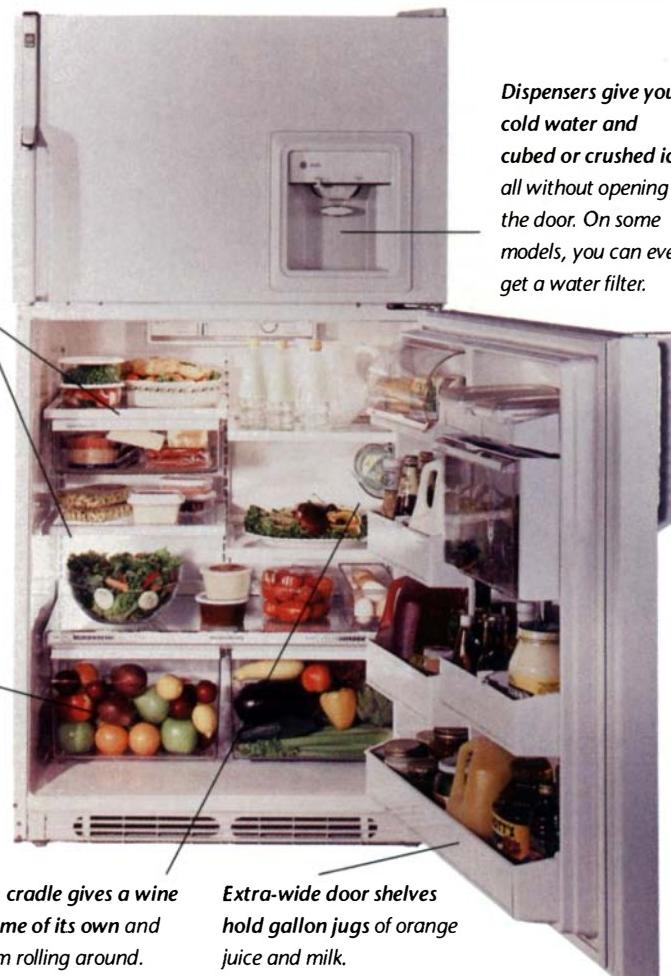
shelf space and shape. To find a model with shelf space that will serve you best, think about these aspects of your kitchen activity:

- ◆ If you entertain frequently, you'll appreciate having shelves wide enough to fit large bowls and platters of food that you've prepared ahead of time.
- ◆ If you're apt to shop for groceries weekly and on a

MANY OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE

Adjustable split shelves allow for varying heights, so you can stash that birthday cake without rearranging the entire fridge.

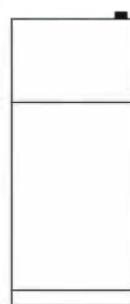
See-through produce drawers show you what's inside, and humidity controls help make sure that lettuce gets enough moisture.



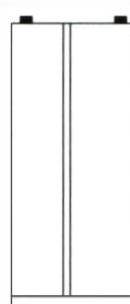
Dispensers give you cold water and cubed or crushed ice, all without opening the door. On some models, you can even get a water filter.

CHOOSE FROM THREE CONFIGURATIONS

Fridge top/freezer bottom is a favorite of the author because you can reach things in the fridge, like the produce drawer, without bending down. Most of us open the fridge 20 times more often than the freezer.



Freezer top/fridge bottom models are most common. They're less expensive to manufacture and to run.



Side-by-side models are best if you have room for a fridge wider than 36 inches. There's easier freezer access, but in narrower models, you might not get the refrigerator width you need.

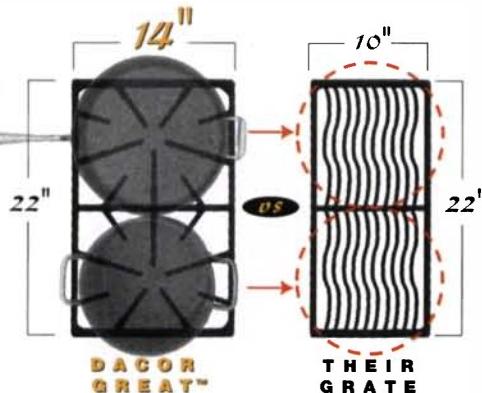
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(bottom) Cast iron wok ring accommodates any standard-size wok for delicious Asian cuisine.

Before buying a commercial-style cooktop, try to fit a 14" pan on it. Our challenge is for you to find one on which the pan will not overlap the adjacent burner grates. Other cooktops have 10" wide mini-grates because they try to squeeze the equivalent of eight burners into a 48" expanse. Only the DACOR GREATSTM found on the stainless steel DACOR Epicure CooktopTM will meet the challenge.

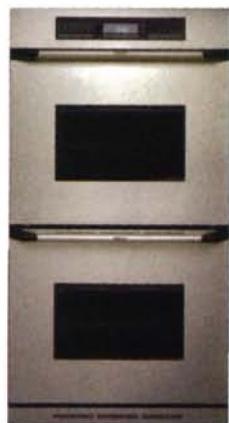


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KITCHENS FOR COOKS



Built-in refrigerators can be customized to blend in with your kitchen cabinets, and they'll fit flush with them.

larger scale rather than every few days, you might need a wider, more capacious refrigerator.

♦ **If you do much cooking and freezing ahead,** you'll likely need a freezer large enough to hold your frozen stocks, stews, and pastry doughs.

NARROW THE FIELD

Deciding on configuration will help focus your selection. The three options are pictured on p. 22. From there, choosing a built-in or a free-standing refrigerator will further narrow the field.

Built-in fridges are customized. The main advantage to built-in fridges is aesthetic; they're made to take on customized front panels and to fit flush with your kitchen cabinets. You can

choose from an assortment of colors or order a panel cut to order that matches the rest of your cabinets.

Built-in refrigerators are taller but shallower, allowing you to see more of what's inside.

Built-in refrigerators come in several widths, and at 24 inches deep (standard kitchen-cabinet depth), they are shallower than their free-

standing counterparts. Although it seems like you'd lose valuable space with a shallower refrigerator, you actually get greater accessibility. For me, seeing just about everything without having to forage is one of the biggest advantages of built-ins. With deeper units, delicious leftovers you set aside for tomorrow are easily forgotten. Shallower fridges are built taller (usually 84 inches high) to make up for what's lost in depth.

The main manufacturers of built-in refrigerators are Sub-Zero, General Electric, Amana, and KitchenAid. Models range in price from about \$3000 to \$4800, depending on the size and options you choose.

Freestanding refrigerators are deeper. Most won't

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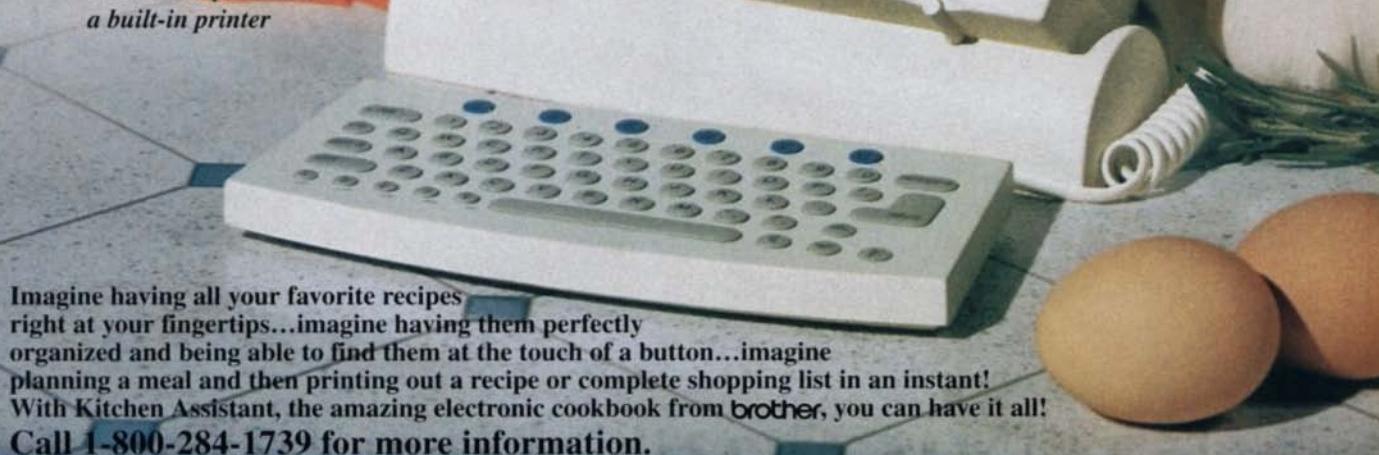
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KITCHENS FOR COOKS

stand flush with standard kitchen cabinets, so you'll either need to push the cabinets forward or have the



Sub-Zero is the only company that makes modular refrigeration drawers, which allow you to put refrigerator and freezer units just about anywhere you want them.

refrigerator jut out a few inches.

The main brands you'll find are Amana, Frigidaire, General Electric, Kitchen-Aid, Maytag, and Whirlpool. They range in price from \$400 to \$2000, again depending on size and options.

DECIDE ON OPTIONS

The list of optional features for refrigerators is lengthy. Glass shelves that catch spills, adjustable split shelves, slide-out freezer shelves and baskets, adjustable door shelves, see-through produce drawers with humidity controls, meat drawers with temperature controls, dispensers for cold water and crushed or cubed ice, and even noise mufflers are just a sampling of what's available. With built-ins, the options get more specialized,

such as custom cabinet fronts, water filters, and pull-out refrigerator compartments for large trays.

FOR BEST TEMPERATURE CONTROL, CHOOSE TWO COMPRESSORS

Sub-Zero has models that feature separate compressors for the freezer and refrigerator. Most refrigerators are powered by a single compressor in the freezer compartment with a valve that lets cold air into the refrigerator. When you open either the freezer or refrigerator door, the compressor, controlled by a thermostat, shuts off. After you close the door, the compressor goes back on to balance the interior temperature. Your refrigerator's interior temperature should stay about 36°F, and the freezer



Built-ins come 30, 36, 42, and 48 inches wide. Be sure the fridge you buy fits not only in your kitchen, but through the door as well.

should be -5° to -10°F.

A compressor's frequent switching on and off can mean constant temperature change and more food spoilage. It causes more freezer burn and crystallization. With

Photo: courtesy of Sub-Zero

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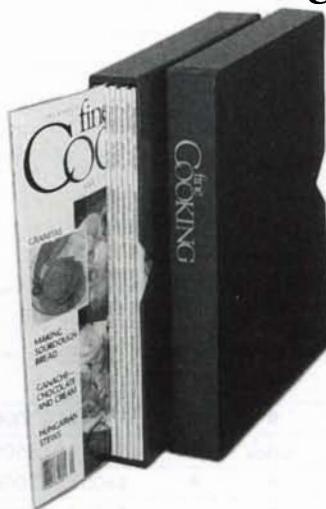
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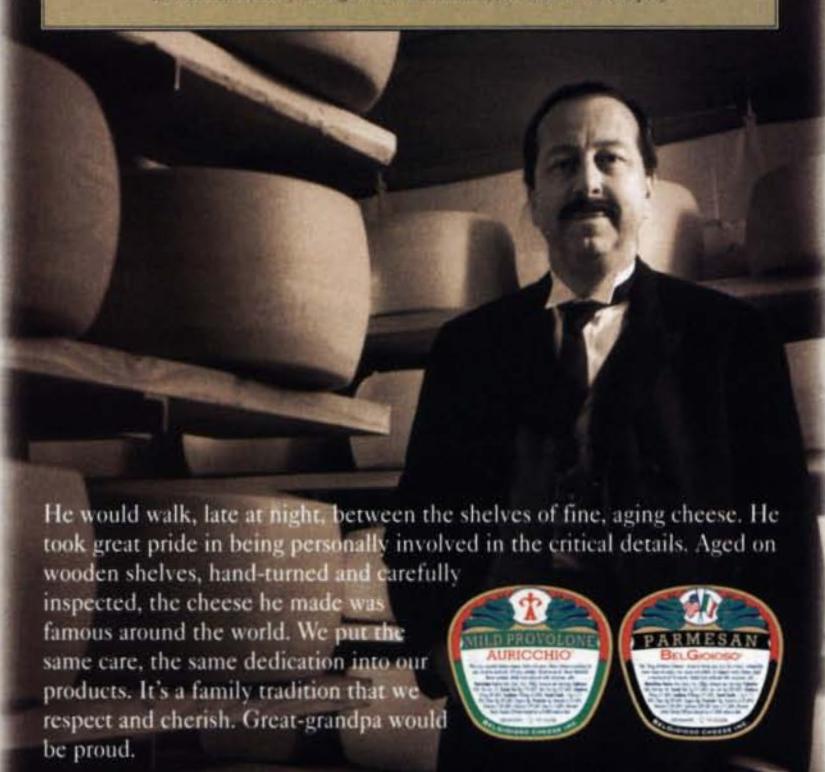
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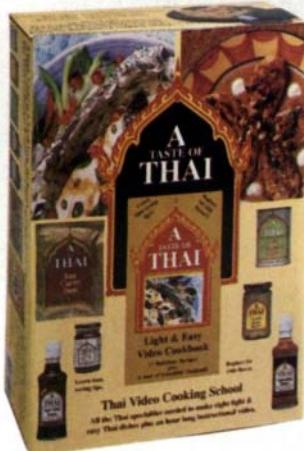
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*Certified kitchen designer
Don Silvers is the author of
Kitchen Design with Cooking
in Mind (NMI, 1994). ♦*

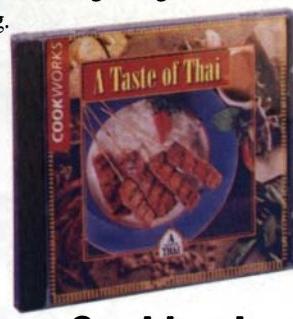
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Do you have a clever way to peel vegetables, line a cake pan, or keep herbs tasting fresh? Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Or send your tip by e-mail: see p. 6 for *Fine Cooking's* Internet, America Online, and CompuServe addresses. We pay for tips we publish.

Save stuffing from scorching

During the last hour or so of roasting, a bird's exposed stuffing often cooks more quickly than the rest of the roaster, and sometimes it burns. To keep the stuffing from scorching during the final stretch of roasting time, cover the cavity with a small piece of aluminum foil.

—Anne Disrude,
Jersey City, NJ



To keep exposed stuffing from burning, cover it with aluminum foil during the last stage of roasting.

Zip up cream cheese to soften

To soften cream cheese easily without melting, seal it in a zip-top plastic bag and immerse it in hot water. The cream cheese will be pliable in minutes.

—Helen D. Conwell,
Fairhope, AL

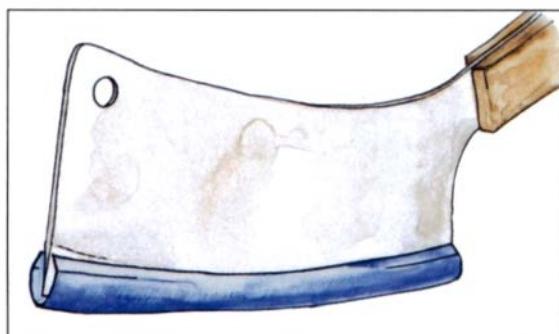
Dry mustard in cheese sauces

I've found that a pinch of dry mustard in my cheese sauces helps bring out the flavor of the cheese.

—Eric Corson,
Epsom, NH

Cleaver blade guard

If you've lost (or never had) a blade guard for a large knife such as a cleaver, try buying a



Guard your cleaver blade with the binder from a report cover.

clear plastic report cover like those used to hold college term papers. Its long plastic clip can be trimmed to the knife blade's length, and it slides easily and fits snugly over the exposed blade.

—Mark F. Hillger,
Buffalo, NY

Salvaging burned baked goods

Breads, rolls, and cream puffs that are burned on the bottom can easily be salvaged. Let the burned item cool and then simply sand its blackened base lightly with the smallest holes on a box grater until it's just the right shade of brown.

—Kate Cohen,
Albany, NY

Christmas egg nog in your French toast

I make egg nog French toast as a holiday treat, soaking the bread in egg nog rather than the traditional egg and milk. To serve, I make a syrup from heated orange marmalade and sprinkle the toast with

finely chopped candied citrus peels or candied ginger.

—Bill Moran,
San Diego, TX

Separating dried fruit

When baking with sticky items like raisins and dried fruits, I roll the pieces in my hands with just a dab of flour before baking. This separates the pieces and keeps them from bunching together in the batter, making more uniform cookies and cakes. The small bit of flour that's on the fruit disappears during baking.

—Myrna Fox,
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

Rulers in the kitchen

I always keep one ruler in a kitchen drawer and another with my wooden spoons on the counter. This way, they're always handy when I need to measure a baking dish or casserole. (At our house, we need two rulers since one often disappears at homework time).

—Ellen Sandberg,
North Vancouver,
British Columbia ♦

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Roasting Your Holiday Bird

Get crisp skin, moist meat, and savory pan juices with a two-step roasting method for turkey, duck, or goose

BY LARRY FORGIONE

It's holiday time and you're giving The Dinner. You love to cook, so the hours in the kitchen are, in principle, a pleasure: baking a few pies; peeling potatoes, carrots, and parsnips; simmering fresh cranberry compote. But then there's The Bird.

Whether you've chosen to make turkey, goose, or even duck, roasting a bird is a challenge. Moist, evenly cooked meat, crisp skin, and perfect drippings for gravy don't happen without some nurturing from you. And each type of bird has its own problems: with turkey, the breast meat can turn dry before the dark meat is done, and with goose and duck, the abundance of fat under the skin can make the finished birds greasy. Since so much is riding on what's to be the centerpiece of your meal, it's always helpful to have some advice. Here is mine.

FREE-RANGE IS BEST, BUT A FRESH BIRD IS FINE
I think birds that have been organically or naturally fed and allowed to run free have cleaner flavor and are moister with juices, rather than with fat.

Free-range turkeys aren't always easy to find, and good, fresh geese and ducks may also require some effort to get. You may need to special-order from a good butcher or even buy your bird by mail-order. You can order naturally fed turkey from Murray's (800/741-3871) and naturally fed turkey, duck, and goose from d'Artagnan (800/327-8246). Both suppliers prefer a week's notice during the busy season. Many grocers carry fresh, minimally processed turkeys at the holidays, which would be my next choice. In any case, don't use a frozen bird, nor one that's "self-basting," which has probably been injected with a yellowish fat similar to the fake butter on popcorn.

PICK A STURDY PAN WITH HIGH SIDES

Your roasting pan should be rugged and easy to hoist

with a heavy bird resting inside. I prefer heavy-gauge or anodized aluminum or cast iron. Secure handles are essential. The pan should be big enough so that the bird doesn't touch the sides, and the sides should be 1½ to 2 inches high. If you must use a disposable aluminum roasting pan, stack two or three to give the roaster adequate support. A rack isn't absolutely necessary, but it makes removing the bird a little easier. I prefer to use a rack for duck and goose, since my roasting method calls for water in the pan.

GIVE A RINSE, A MASSAGE, AND AN EASY TIE

Take the bird from the refrigerator so that it just comes to room temperature before you begin cook-



The key to desirable crisp skin is frequent basting with flavorful juices. You don't need a special tool—a large spoon will do.

A color photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a white apron, holding a large, golden-brown roasted turkey. He is standing in a kitchen or dining room setting with warm lighting and a lamp in the background.

*"Few things are as satisfying
as presenting a roasted bird
to my guests at holiday time,"*
says Larry Forgione.

ing; it will roast more evenly that way. Don't let the bird sit around in a warm kitchen, however; this invites bacteria. Trim excess fat and skin flaps. As a precaution against bacteria growth, rinse all poultry inside and out and pat it dry.

Ducks and geese need special handling to deal with the fat. These birds are quite fatty, which means that their meat can be rich and moist, but you need to take steps to manage the grease. To allow the fat to melt better and to run off during cooking, slip your fingers or a rubber spatula between the layer of fat and the meat, pressing gently as you go (see photo, opposite). Don't go between the skin and the fat or you may tear the skin. If you have a Chinese market in your area, you can probably get a duck or goose that's already had a similar treatment, called ballooning, in which air is pumped under the layer of fat to separate it from the skin.

Whichever method you use as a first step against fattiness, be sure to also prick the skin all over with a sharp-tined fork; this lets excess fat drain during cooking. I also like to turn on a fan in the kitchen to help the bird air-dry as it warms up. You'll get crisper skin that way.

All birds need a good massage. I rub the skin of any poultry I'm going to roast with oil, and then I massage in a simple mixture of salt and pepper.

I prefer not to spend time on trussing. Even heat around the legs and thighs is key, and trussing, which is generally done tightly, compresses the legs and thighs against the side of the bird. This means even more lag time for the longer-roasting dark meat, which is often still undercooked when the drier breast meat is done. Instead of trussing, tuck the wings under themselves and tie a piece of string loosely from one leg to the other so they don't splay apart.

ROAST STUFFED BIRDS LONGER

Stuffing in a bird lengthens the cooking time, because stuffing delays heat buildup in the bird's cavity.

The bird has two cavities—a small one at its neck and a larger one at its legs. I stuff the body cavity only; with goose and duck especially, this helps fat run off more freely. Make sure the filling

A guide to successful roasting

Opening the oven door to check on your roaster may make the kitchen smell great, but it won't cook your bird any faster. Here's a surer way to get a perfect bird. I've given a range of times because ovens vary.

TURKEY (allow 1½ pounds per person)

Unstuffed: 12 minutes per pound

Stuffed: 16 minutes per pound

Initial interval: 450°F for 30 minutes

Second step: lower heat to 375°F and continue to roast

DUCK (allow at least 2 pounds per person)

Unstuffed: 25 minutes per pound

Stuffed: add 20 to 30 minutes to total cooking time

Initial interval: 375°F for 45 minutes

Second step: raise heat to 400°F and continue to roast

GOOSE (allow at least 2 pounds per person)

Unstuffed: 12 to 15 minutes per pound

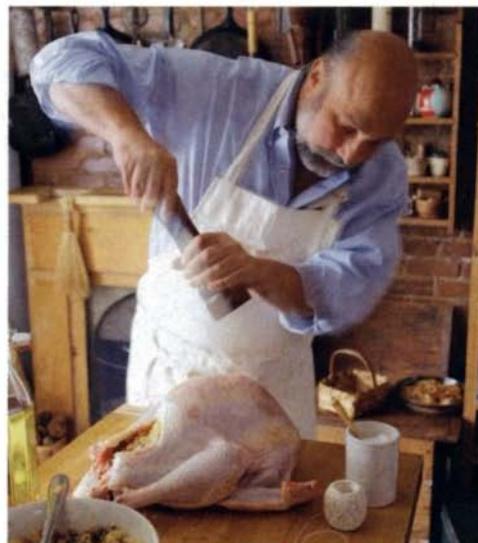
Stuffed: add 25 to 30 minutes to total cooking time

Initial interval: 375°F for 45 minutes

Second step: raise heat to 400°F and continue to roast



Stuff the cavity of your turkey only three-quarters full so the stuffing can expand.



Ready your roaster with an olive-oil rub and season it generously with salt and pepper.



Don't truss, just tie. Loosely tied legs let the bird cook evenly.

and the bird are at room temperature. Wait until right before the bird goes in the oven (don't leave a stuffed bird sitting around) and fill it only three-quarters full so the stuffing can expand. Since you've tied the legs loosely, the stuffing will be exposed, ready to develop those chewy brown bits from roasting (my favorite part of the stuffing).

USE TWO OVEN TEMPERATURES TO GET THE BEST FROM EACH TYPE OF BIRD

For the best heat circulation, position your oven rack so that the top of the bird will be just above the middle of the oven.

With turkey, the goal is crisp skin, fully cooked dark meat, and white meat that's still moist. To get all this, start with high heat and then go to low. The high-heat interval begins the browning and

caramelizing that make a turkey truly tasty. With duck or goose, it's the reverse: start with low heat and then go to high. Lower initial heat allows duck and goose fat to render freely without searing the skin, which would seal more fat within the bird.

The less you move the bird, the better. Ignore methods that call for rotating a large bird from breast to side. Each time you move the roaster, you risk tearing its skin. It's wiser to turn the pan.

Start roasting with the legs pointing toward the back of the oven. The rear of the oven is always

Duck and goose need special handling to deal with fattiness. Press your fingers or a soft spatula between the fat and the meat, going over as much of the bird as possible.



The stuffing peeking from the roast duck develops those prized chewy brown bits from the juices that flow during cooking.

a little hotter, and it's better to give the richer, slower-cooking leg and thigh sections more heat than the breast. For the last hour, turn the breast toward the back of the oven.

BASTE FREQUENTLY FOR MOIST MEAT WITH THE MOST FLAVOR

Frequent basting is one of the best ways I know to get tender, delicious meat that's moist and cooked through. You don't have to fixate on crisping the skin: this will happen in the course of roasting.

For basting, you don't need any special equipment. I like the even browning and control I get with a pastry brush. A kitchen spoon works well, too, as does a bulb baster. Spoon or pour off pan juices and fat every hour and save them for basting. Be careful of the hot juices, which can splatter and burn. Start basting after the first 30 to 45 minutes and repeat every half hour, but stop for the final half hour to let the skin get crisp.

For duck and goose, roasting with water in the pan helps manage drippings. Water helps pull the fat out of the bird, and it creates steam in the oven to prevent the skin from browning too quickly.

KEEP TURKEY'S LIGHT AND DARK MEAT COOKING IN TANDEM

The breast meat on a turkey, especially a big one, often cooks faster than the dark meat. There are a few things you can do to keep the light and dark meat cooking in step with each other.

Forget trussing—a loose tie is easier, and the dark meat will cook faster.

Drape the breast with cheesecloth to keep the meat moist on bigger birds. For turkeys smaller than 20 pounds, there's no need to drape; frequent basting is enough to seal in moisture. The cheesecloth should be soaked in oil or butter—or better still, pan drippings from the first hour of roasting—and should be basted as you would the rest of the bird. Remove the cloth for the last half hour of roasting to let the breast skin get crisp.

If the breast is cooking faster than the rest of the bird, remove the bird from the oven. Let it cool slightly, and split the bird on each side of the breast between the leg and thigh sections by gently pushing the legs open to give them more direct heat. Return the bird to the oven and continue to baste the breast often. It's okay if your bird isn't picture-perfect: evenly cooked, moist, delicious meat is much more important. If you want, you can tie the drumsticks back together when you bring the bird to the table.

USE A CLASSIC TEST FOR DONENESS

Follow the time and temperature guidelines in the chart on p. 34, and for the last half hour of cooking time, keep testing. To test all birds for doneness, prick the thigh meat down to the joint and press gently—if the juice runs clear, the bird is cooked. If the juice runs pink, the bird needs more time. An instant-read thermometer stuck into the inner thigh below the leg joint (be sure you don't hit any bone), should read 175° to 180°F. A thermometer inserted in the center of the stuffing should read at least 160°. When you're ready to transfer the bird to a platter,

Get mouthwatering gravy by roasting it

First roast the giblets and aromatics for a rich stock, and then start the gravy in the oven

♦ **Cook the drippings and giblets.** During roasting, let the bits in the roasting pan brown well, making sure they don't burn (add water or stock if they begin to). After the first hour, add the neck and giblets (not the liver), onions, a few garlic cloves, and some herb sprigs. Roast until browned, about 45 to 50 minutes.

♦ **Make the rich stock.** Remove the parts, vegetables, and herbs with a slotted spoon, transfer to a saucepan, and add 2 quarts stock. Simmer until it reduces by half, skim the fat,

and set aside. After the cooked bird is removed from the pan, spoon the fat from the pan drippings or pour the drippings into a degreasing cup. Discard the fat. Add the drippings to the reduced stock and set aside.

♦ **Roast the flour base for flavor.** Dust the roasting pan with 3 tablespoons flour. With a wooden spoon, vigorously rub all the brown bits from the pan with the flour. There's no need to add more fat to the pan: there will be enough residue. Stir in ½ cup of the reduced stock and return the pan to the



Use a wooden spoon to blend flour and all the browned bits.

oven. Cook 15 minutes, stirring once or twice.

♦ **Combine the stock and base.** Whisk the flour mixture

into the saucepan of reduced stock. Bring it to a simmer, cook for 10 minutes, and strain. You'll have a dark, rich pan gravy. If you like thicker gravy, make a "white wash" by combining 2 tablespoons flour with 3 tablespoons water. Add a little of this mixture at a time to the simmer-

ing gravy until it thickens to your liking, and then simmer for another 4 to 5 minutes to cook off the floury taste.



Roast goose makes a delicious alternative to turkey. You'll get crisp skin and meat that's not greasy by roasting first in a low oven and then increasing the temperature.

ease a thin spatula under the bird before lifting it from the pan. Those rich juices are sticky.

Let the roaster rest on a platter for 20 minutes or so before carving time. Resting gives the meat a chance to relax, to pull its juices back in, and to hold them. Juices run faster and more freely out of meat that's sliced when it's very hot. (For tips on carving a turkey, see Technique Class, p. 18).

Roast Turkey

Allow 1 1/4 pounds of turkey per person; this will leave you with ample leftovers.

**1 free-range, naturally fed turkey
2 Tbs. olive oil
2 Tbs. kosher salt mixed with a few grinds of black pepper**

Position your oven rack so that the top of the bird will be just above the middle of the oven. Heat the oven to 450°. Trim excess fat. Rinse the turkey thoroughly inside and out, and pat it dry. Stuff the bird three-quarters full. Rub the outside with the olive oil and then massage the bird thoroughly with the salt and pepper mixture. Tie the legs together loosely.

Put the bird in a roasting pan; position the pan so that the legs point to the back of the oven. Follow the chart on p. 34 and start basting after the first 30 to 45 min.

After the first hour, tilt the pan and spoon out fat drippings, which you'll use for basting. After the second hour, spoon out more drippings for basting both the bird and the dressing, if you're baking it separately.

For the last hour of roasting, turn the pan so that the legs face the oven door. Refrain from basting for the last half hour of cooking time. The bird is done when the juices run clear from a thigh pricked all the way down to the joint and when a meat thermometer inserted in the inner thigh below the leg joint reads 175° to 180°. A thermometer inserted in the stuffing's center should read at least 160°. Transfer the bird to a platter and let it rest for 20 min. before carving.

Roast Duck or Goose

Ducks weigh 4 1/2 to 6 pounds; allow at least 2 pounds per person. Geese weigh 8 to 10 pounds; allow at least 2 pounds per person.

**1 free-range, naturally fed duck or goose
2 Tbs. olive oil
2 Tbs. kosher salt mixed with a few grinds of black pepper
1 cup water**

Heat the oven to 375°. Trim any excess fat, rinse the bird inside and out, and pat it dry. Slip your fingers or a rubber spatula between the fat and the meat to separate them, and prick the skin all over with a sharp-tined fork, taking care not to prick the meat. If possible, turn on a fan to let the bird air-dry while it comes to room temperature. Stuff the bird three-quarters full. Rub the outside with the olive oil and then massage the bird thoroughly with the salt and pepper mixture. Tie the legs together loosely.

Put the bird in a roasting pan (preferably fitted with a rack). Pour the water in the pan. Position the pan so that the bird's legs point toward the back of the oven. Roast for 45 min. Remove the pan from the oven and pour off the fat and water. Separate the fat to use for basting.

Return the bird to the oven and increase the temperature to 400°. Continue to cook for another 1 hour and 15 min. for a duck; 2 hours for a goose. During this time, pour grease off once or twice more.

For the last hour of roasting, turn the pan so that the legs face the front of the oven. Refrain from basting for the last half hour of cooking time. The bird is done when the juices run clear from a thigh pricked all the way down to the joint and when a meat thermometer inserted in the inner thigh below the leg joint reads 175° to 180°. A thermometer inserted in the stuffing's center should read at least 160°. Transfer the bird to a platter and let it rest 15 min. before carving.

Larry Forgione is the chef/owner of An American Place in New York City. He wrote An American Place: Celebrating the Flavors of America (Morrow, 1996). ♦

Traditional Southern Stuffings

Nutty cornbread or mellow rice serves as a base for two perfect complements to roasted poultry

BY SCOTT PEACOCK

While the mashed potatoes made my sister swoon, and the drumsticks provoked a tug of war among the others, the stuffing is what I liked best when my family had roasted turkey for the holidays. Stuffing is still the first thing I go back for when it's time for seconds.

Whether based on bread, cornbread, or rice, most stuffings start with chopped aromatic vegetables cooked until soft and slightly caramelized. The vegetables are tossed with the starch base, more seasoning is added, and the whole thing is moistened with a little stock before filling whatever bird you're roasting. If you plan it right, you'll have extra stuffing to bake in a casserole so there's plenty for everyone.

The first steps to good stuffings



Slowly render bacon to get flavorful fat for cooking. "Bacon fat's rich for sure, but olive oil just won't do," says the author.

MILD BIRDS NEED MILD STUFFING

Choose a bread stuffing for a milder bird like turkey. I like cornbread because of its nutty flavor, but good-quality white or whole-grain is fine, too. Stay away from anything Wonder Bread-ish or the stuffing will be mushy. Use day-old bread for better absorption and texture; if you must use fresh bread, dry it briefly in the oven.

Grain stuffings, usually denser than bread-based ones, are a better match for darker, richer birds like duck and goose.

WELL-SEASONED PARTS

MAKE A DELICIOUS WHOLE

As your bird roasts, its juices flavor the stuffing, and the stuffing's seasonings are



in turn absorbed by the roaster. It's important that the final combination of flavor be balanced, so season the bird's cavity before you fill it and season the stuffing generously while you prepare it.

Coarsely chop your vegetables and cook them just until tender: they'll be cooked a second time inside the bird's cavity. I cook the vegetables in bacon fat for the extra flavor.

Earthily, robust herbs, such as sage, thyme, and rosemary, are the best accents for stuffing. I think dried herbs are just fine (I like Spice Islands) but if you prefer fresh, you'll get good results as long as you stick to the hearty varieties I've mentioned. Anything fragile, such as parsley or basil, will wilt and turn bitter during the stuffing's prolonged cooking.

For moistening, use mild broth so you don't overpower the bird's flavors. I sometimes add a little egg, too, which acts as a binder. Moisten the stuffing just until it holds together. If you're baking



Sauté vegetables just until tender. They'll undergo a second cooking in the bird's cavity during roasting.



the extra stuffing outside the bird, baste it with the roaster's pan juices.

Figure on $\frac{3}{4}$ cup stuffing per pound of bird. Always cool stuffing completely before you fill the bird's cavity, and never let a stuffed bird sit for any length of time, whether it's raw or cooked. Fill the bird about three-quarters full, leaving space for the stuffing to swell during roasting. Be sure the stuffing in the bird reaches an internal temperature of at least 160°F.

Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing

Once you've added the rice, don't stir or the stuffing will get gummy. *Yields enough to fill two 5-pound ducklings or one 10-pound goose, plus leftovers.*

6 Tbs. unsalted butter

2½ cups shucked, drained fresh oysters, liquor reserved

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1¼ lb. spicy smoked sausage, pricked with a fork

5 slices country-style bacon, cut in 1½-inch pieces

1 cup chopped onion

1½ tsp. dried thyme

½ cup chopped green bell pepper
2 small hot green chiles, seeded and minced
1½ tsp. coarsely ground dried chile pepper
2 Tbs. finely chopped garlic
Pinch cayenne
2 Tbs. tomato paste
2½ cups drained, peeled, and finely chopped high-quality canned tomatoes
1 cup mild chicken stock
2 cups raw long-grain rice

In a large sauté pan, heat 4 Tbs. of the butter until foaming. Quickly sauté the oysters, seasoning lightly with salt and pepper, just until the edges begin to curl. Transfer to a colander set over a bowl to cool and drain. If the oysters are large, cut into 1-inch chunks. Add the reserved oyster liquor to draining juices.

In a heavy skillet filled with ½ inch water over medium heat, cook the sausage, uncovered, until the water evaporates and the sausage is deep brown and firm, about 15 min.; add more water if needed. Cool, cut diagonally into ½-inch slices, and set aside. In a large, heavy skillet, brown the bacon slowly until crisp. Remove the meat; leave the fat and caramelized bits. Add the onion to the hot fat and sauté until translucent, about 10 min. Add the thyme, bell pepper, chiles, and ground chile. Cook until the vegetables are well cooked but not deeply colored, about 10 min. Stir in the garlic; cook 3 min., stirring often to avoid coloring. Add the salt, pepper, cayenne, tomato paste, and tomatoes; continue cooking about 3 min. Measure the reserved oyster juices; add stock to make 2½ cups. Add this and the sausage to the vegetables. Cover and simmer gently, stirring frequently, 15 to 20 min. Adjust seasonings.

In a large, heavy, nonaluminum pan, melt the remaining 2 Tbs. butter. Add the rice and cook over medium heat for 2 min., stirring constantly to coat. Add the tomato mixture; stir well to combine. Cover tightly; cook over medium-low heat until the rice is tender, about 20 min. Toss in the oysters, adjust seasonings, and let cool completely before filling the bird. Bake extra stuffing in a greased casserole for about 45 min., basting occasionally.

Cornbread Pecan Stuffing

If you're baking extra stuffing outside the turkey and you like a crust, don't baste for the final 20 minutes. *Yields enough to fill one large turkey, plus leftovers.*

FOR THE CORNBREAD:

2 cups cornmeal
½ tsp. salt
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
2 cups buttermilk
3 eggs, beaten
4 Tbs. butter

FOR THE STUFFING:

4 Tbs. unsalted butter; more melted butter for moistening, if desired
5 slices country-style bacon, cut in 1½-inch pieces



Cornbread baked ahead and left out to get stale gives texture to Cornbread Pecan Stuffing. Keep the cornbread unwrapped—sealed up, it will spoil.

1½ cups chopped onion
1½ cups chopped celery (including inner leaves)
2 large shallots, finely chopped
2 tsp. dried thyme
1 Tbs. dried sage
3 cups pecans, toasted
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ cup mild chicken stock; more to taste
3 eggs, beaten

Make the cornbread—Heat the oven to 450°F. In a mixing bowl, combine the dry ingredients. Add the buttermilk to the eggs and stir into the dry ingredients, mixing just to combine. Put the batter in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet and set it in the oven to let the butter melt. Swirl the melted butter around the pan and add the batter. Bake until golden on top and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 20 min. Cool and tear into coarse chunks over a large bowl.

Make the stuffing—Put 4 Tbs. butter in a large, heavy skillet, add the bacon, and brown slowly until crisp. Remove the meat; leave fat and caramelized bits. Add the vegetables and herbs; gently sauté, stirring often, until vegetables are just tender, 10 to 15 min. Toss the vegetables and pecans with the cornbread. Adjust seasonings. Combine the stock and eggs. Moisten the stuffing with the egg mixture, stirring just until stuffing holds together. Moisten with melted butter if desired. Cool the stuffing completely before filling the turkey. Bake extra in a greased casserole for about 45 min., basting occasionally.

Scott Peacock is a southern chef. He and his mentor, Edna Lewis, founded the Society for the Revival and Preservation of Southern Food. They're currently at work on a cookbook. ♦



*Slowly braising
these carrots in soy
sauce, honey, and
orange juice makes
them tender and
brightly sweet.*

Slow Cooking Enhances Winter Vegetables

A low oven temperature and plenty of time produce vegetable dishes with meltingly tender textures and loads of flavor

BY JODY ADAMS

In spring and summer, vegetables from your backyard vegetable patch or local farmers' market are so fresh and flavorful that you can get away with giving them only a light sauté or a quick blanch. In winter, however, it's a different story. Your garden has gone gray, farmers' markets are as remote as the smell of suntan oil, and you're reduced to trolling the produce aisle for anything fresh. Fortunately, one of the best ways to enhance the flavor of winter vegetables is by cooking them slowly. They'll reward you with a surprising depth of flavor and an irresistible texture.

BIG FLAVORS TAKE TIME BUT NOT EFFORT

I slow cook vegetables the same way I slow cook meat—by braising and roasting. Once under way, slow-cooked vegetables are best left alone. This allows you time to do other things—take a bath, prepare the rest of the meal, spend time with your kids—while the aroma of caramelizing leeks, carrots, or escarole fills the house. I especially like slow-cooked vegetables for big gatherings because the recipes are easily doubled (or tripled) without a lot of extra fussing.

BRAISING INVITES FLAVORS TO BLEND

Braising refers to browning vegetables in a little bit of fat and then gently cooking them in a covered pot with a small amount of liquid, usually stock and wine. Firm vegetables relax in the low, moist heat, releasing their juices. Flavors blend and intensify. The first forkful of braised vegetables is a revelation in complexity. Part of the charm of a braise of mixed vegetables is that the fennel actually tastes a little like cabbage and the leeks taste a little like fennel and everything tastes a little like pancetta and thyme.

I like to use seasonings such as garlic and ginger and hearty herbs (bay leaves and rosemary, for example) because they release their flavors slowly and



"The food I love to cook, the food my family and I love to eat, takes time," says Jody Adams, here with husband Ken Rivard.

become more appealing over a long cooking time. Delicate herbs, such as basil, chives, or dill, would fade and contribute little to the finished dish.

Give the vegetables a rich, caramelized flavor by first browning them in olive oil, vegetable oil, or butter. Use a heavy sauté pan or Dutch oven and brown the vegetables in several batches if necessary. Over-crowding the pan is a mistake: you'll half-steam everything and the final flavor of the braise will suffer.

When everything is nicely browned, add wine or stock to deglaze the bottom of the pan. I love the combination of chicken stock and white wine for braised vegetables, but vegetable stock or water, with or without wine, works as well. The flavors of the finished dish will just be lighter and less complex. Don't add too much liquid or you'll end up with a thin sauce instead of the rich glaze you're after.

Braise on the stove or in the oven. I find the warmth of the oven comforting in the winter, but a low burner works, too. The time a braise takes will depend on the vegetables and how they're cut up. I prefer to leave them in larger pieces—quartered



A circle of waxed paper acts as a lid to trap the moisture and flavor of braised escarole during cooking in the oven.



Check for doneness with the tip of a knife. Slow-roasted broccoli and cauliflower will stay slightly firm.

fennel and cabbage, for example—because the longer they take to cook, the more flavor they develop. In any case, keep things relatively uniform in size.

Test for doneness by gently stabbing the vegetables with the tip of a knife. You want them tender but not falling apart. If the vegetables are done but there's still quite a bit of diluted cooking liquid, don't risk the texture of the vegetables by continued cooking, but don't compromise the flavor of the sauce by serving it as is, either. Instead, scoop out the vegetables and set the pan over high heat for a few minutes to reduce the liquid to a thicker, more concentrated glaze. Toss the vegetables back in, check the seasoning, and serve.

SLOW ROASTING INTENSIFIES FLAVOR

Roasting means cooking uncovered in a hot oven. Ideally, roasting releases the vegetables' sugars, which then caramelize into a naturally sweet glaze. The results are deep, mellow flavors and succulent flesh. As opposed to braised vegetables, where the flavors tend to meld, slow-roasted vegetables develop their own distinctive tastes; in a sense, they become more intense versions of themselves.

The trick to slow roasting vegetables is emphasizing the slow part. This means using an oven no hotter than 325°F. If the oven is too hot, the surface

of the vegetables will caramelize, and eventually burn, before the interior is cooked. I like to toss vegetables in a little oil and seasoning—thyme, rosemary, and curry powder are some favorites—and then spread them out in a roasting pan without piling them too closely. The vegetables are done when they can be easily pierced with the tip of a knife.

When roasting vegetables, use a low oven so the interior has a chance to cook before the surface gets too dark.

Winter-Vegetable Braise

The fibrous vegetables in this braise become tender without turning to mush. *Serves four as a main course; eight as a side dish.*

4 Tbs. butter
2 oz. pancetta or bacon, thinly sliced and cut into strips
1½ lb. fennel, trimmed and quartered
4 medium leeks, trimmed, cut in half lengthwise, and washed well
1½ lb. Savoy cabbage, cut into wedges

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

4 cloves garlic, crushed

½ cup dry sherry

2 bay leaves

1 tsp. fresh thyme

1 tsp. fennel seeds

2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock

¼ cup parsley leaves

Heat the oven to 325°F. In a 12-inch Dutch oven or casserole, heat 2 Tbs. of the butter over medium-high heat. Add the pancetta and cook until it starts to render its fat and become lightly crisp. Remove the pancetta and set aside, leaving all the fat in the pan. In the same pan, brown the fennel, leeks, and cabbage in small batches;



A Parmesan and breadcrumb topping gives braised escarole a contrast of textures.



The flavors of a mixed vegetable braise slowly meld into a sumptuous, comforting stew of cabbage, fennel, and leeks.

don't crowd them. Add more butter as needed and turn the vegetables to brown all sides, allowing about 3 min. per side. As the vegetables are browned, season them with salt and pepper and remove them from the pan. When all the vegetables are browned, reduce the heat to medium low and add the garlic. Cook gently until the garlic begins to soften, about 3 min. Return the fennel, leeks, and cabbage to the pan. Add the sherry; cook until reduced by half. Add the reserved pancetta, the bay leaves, thyme, fennel seeds, and stock. Cover and cook in the oven until the vegetables are tender, 30 to 45 min. Uncover and cook until the juices reduce to a rich consistency, another 15 to 20 min. Garnish with the parsley.

Braised Escarole with a Parmesan Crust

I love the silky texture of braised escarole under a crunchy Parmesan crust. This technique can easily be used with leeks, endive, and cabbage. *Serves four as a side dish.*

4 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
½ cup thinly sliced white onion
1 medium head escarole, trimmed, washed, dried, and cut into 2-inch wide strips
1 Tbs. chopped garlic
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
1 tsp. chopped fresh sage
½ tsp. grated lemon zest
½ cup white wine
1 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
¼ cup fresh breadcrumbs

Heat the oven to 325°F. In a 12-inch ovenproof sauté pan, heat 2 Tbs. of the olive oil over medium heat and cook the onions until brown and slightly caramelized, 7 to 10 min. Add the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil, the escarole, garlic, salt, and pepper and cook over medium heat to wilt the escarole, about 5 min. Add the rosemary, sage, lemon zest, wine, and stock. Bring to a boil and cook for 10 min. to reduce the liquid. Cover with a piece of waxed paper that lies flat on the vegetables and

put in the oven to cook until tender and a good bit of the liquid is absorbed, about 40 min. Turn the oven to 400°. Remove the waxed paper, sprinkle the escarole with the Parmesan and breadcrumbs, and bake until golden and crisp, about 15 min. longer.

Orange-Glazed Carrots with Mint

The caramelized sugars of the carrots are enhanced by honey and balanced by the acidity of orange juice. *Serves four as a side dish.*

1½ lb. small carrots, peeled
2 Tbs. vegetable oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 Tbs. chopped fresh ginger
1 tsp. chopped garlic
1 Tbs. chopped shallots
2 Tbs. honey
½ cup fresh orange juice
1 Tbs. soy sauce
¼ cup water
1 Tbs. chopped fresh mint

Cut the carrots on the diagonal into 3-inch lengths. Cut thicker pieces in half lengthwise to make them uniform in size. Heat the oil in a 9-inch sauté pan over moderate heat. Add the carrots and cook until lightly browned on all sides, about 3 min. per side. Season with salt and pepper. Add the ginger, garlic, and shallots and cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the shallots are softened, 5 to 7 min. Add the honey, orange juice, soy sauce, and water. Cover with a round of waxed paper that fits snugly on the vegetables. Cook the carrots slowly on top of the stove, stirring occasionally, until the carrots are tender and the juices have formed a glaze, 30 to 40 min. Garnish with the mint.

Roasted Curried Broccoli & Cauliflower

Don't expect these vegetables to become soft-tender—they retain a slight bite and take on an addictive nutty flavor. *Serves four as a side dish.*

1 lb. broccoli
1 lb. cauliflower
1 small red onion, cut into ½-inch slices
1 Tbs. chopped garlic
1 Tbs. curry powder
Salt
¼ tsp. dried red chile flakes
3 Tbs. vegetable oil
Chopped cilantro (optional)
Lime juice (optional)

Heat the oven to 325°F. Separate the florets from the broccoli and cauliflower. Peel the remaining broccoli stalks and cut into 3-inch lengths. Put the vegetables in a bowl and toss with the onion, garlic, curry powder, salt, chile flakes, and oil. Spread on a shallow roasting pan and roast in the middle of the oven until tender, 1 to 1½ hours. Stir the vegetables once or twice during roasting; they should be somewhat tender and only starting to brown. Garnish with cilantro and lime juice, if you like.

Jody Adams is the chef at Rialto in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At home, slow-roasted carrots are her son Oliver's favorite vegetable. ♦

A Dessert Buffet for a Relaxed Holiday Party

This make-ahead menu balances sweet flavors with savory accents



BY NANCY SILVERTON

I like to entertain during the holidays, but between work, family, and friends' parties, my schedule is always jam-packed. So instead of trying to wedge a dinner party into a difficult time slot, I

like to throw a dessert party. I can plan it for any time of day—on a chilly afternoon, in the evening after carolling, or even in a late-night slot on New Year's Eve. My guests can't help but be in a good mood when they see a colorful array of dessert after dessert. And instead of sprinting from kitchen to dining table between courses, I can lay out a beautiful spread that needs only occasional replenishing rather than constant attention. I actually get to talk with my guests for a change.



MENU

Cheese Coins

◆
Holiday Butter Cookies with Lemon Curd

◆
Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce

◆
Chocolate Steamed Pudding

◆
Cranberry Tartlets

CHOOSE SWEETS OF VARIED INTENSITIES, AND ADD SAVORY TOUCHES

Whether you make this entire menu or simply use it as inspiration for ideas, keep in mind that a dessert menu is like any other—balance between flavors, textures, colors, and even shapes is crucial. I like to contrast rich, dark, intense desserts like my Chocolate Steamed Pudding against piquant, spicy-sweet ones, like the tiny, jewel-toned Cranberry Tartlets. Some of my recipes are for finger food (Butter

Cookies with Lemon Curd, Cheese Coins, and the tartlets), and the other two are full-sized desserts. And I always make sure to have some un-sweet or less sweet dishes so the whole menu isn't cloying. Here, the cheese pastries are the savory accent and the Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce are spicy and more fruity than sweet.

A bowl of fruit will add luscious color and lighter fare for the table—apples, pomegranates, quince, and persimmons are some of my favorites.

Don't save dessert for last. When you serve a dessert buffet, your guests can enjoy a relaxed pace, and you'll be free to enjoy the party.

DO-AHEAD DOUGHS AND FILLINGS HELP PACE THE PREPARATION

This menu's a copious one, but much of it can be done in advance, as you'll see from the planner on p. 49. All the butter doughs in these recipes freeze beautifully. Thaw them overnight in the refrigerator, and they'll be fine there for up to three days. Fillings and compote can be made three days ahead; just keep an eye on them when you're reheating them, and add water if you need to. Fudge swirl will keep for weeks in the fridge. You can bake the butter cookies a day or two ahead and store them in an airtight container. Baked-ahead butter cookies can be refreshed in a hot oven for a minute just before you fill them (or save that task for an early-arriving guest.)

Cheese Coins

Experiment with coatings—sesame or fennel seeds are delicious. Good, imported Parmesan adds a satisfying bite. *Yields about 10 dozen crackers.*

FOR THE DOUGH:

*10 oz. (2 1/4 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour;
more for dusting the work surface
2 tsp. salt
6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into pieces
1/2 cup grated Parmesan
1/2 cup grated Cheddar
1/3 cup grated Gruyère
1/3 cup sour cream*

FOR THE COATINGS:

*2 Tbs. cornmeal
2 Tbs. coarsely ground black pepper
2 Tbs. paprika
1 egg white, lightly beaten*

Savory accents
such as cheddary
Cheese Coins are
a welcome foil for
the sweets.

In a food processor, combine the flour and salt. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture is coarse and crumbly. Add the Parmesan, Cheddar, and Gruyère, pulsing just to combine. Add the sour cream, pulsing until the dough comes together. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and shape it into a 6x12-inch rectangle. Fold it in three, like a business letter, and cut the dough in thirds. Shape two sections into 5½-inch cylinders 1½ inches in diameter. Shape the third section into a 5½-inch rectangular log 1½ inches square. Seal each section in plastic; refrigerate until well chilled, about 2 hours.

Heat the oven to 375°F. Line several baking sheets with kitchen parchment. Pour the cornmeal, black pepper, and paprika on separate areas of your work surface.

Remove the rectangular log from the refrigerator, brush it with egg white, and roll it in the cornmeal until the log is completely covered. Cut it into ¼-inch slices and arrange the slices ½ inch apart on the baking sheet. Repeat with the two other cylinders, rolling one in black pepper and the other in paprika.

Bake until the crackers turn a light golden brown, about 12 min. Cool them on a rack.

Holiday Butter Cookies with Lemon Curd

If you don't have a pastry bag, use a spoon to fill these cookies. It's best not to stack them once they're filled. *Yields about 2 dozen filled cookies.*

FOR THE COOKIE DOUGH:

*15 oz. (30 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup sugar
2 extra-large egg yolks
1 tsp. vanilla extract
16 3/4 oz. (3 3/4 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour;
more for dusting the work surface*

FOR THE LEMON CURD:

*1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. lemon zest
3 extra-large eggs
3 extra-large egg yolks
3/4 cup sugar*

Make the dough—With an electric mixer on low speed, cream the butter. As it starts to soften, increase the speed to medium; continue beating until smooth, 1 to 2 min. Add the sugar and mix until well blended, about 2 min. Reduce the speed to low and mix just until a soft dough forms.

In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and vanilla extract. Add this to the butter mixture, mixing on medium speed for about 1 min. Add the flour in two stages, mixing each time until just combined, about 1 min. Shape the dough into a ball, seal it in plastic, and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.

Make the lemon curd—Bring a large pot of water to a simmer. In a large metal bowl that will fit over the pot



without touching the water, whisk together the lemon juice, zest, eggs, egg yolks, and sugar until combined. Set the bowl over the pot of simmering water and whisk, scraping the sides of the bowl to keep the eggs from cooking. Cook until foam disappears and the mixture thickens, about 10 min. Pour through a fine mesh strainer into a bowl and set the filling aside to cool. You'll have about 3 cups.

Bake the cookies—Heat the oven to 325°F and line four baking sheets with kitchen parchment. Cut the dough in half; refrigerate one half. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. With a 2-inch cookie cutter (round or a holiday shape), stamp out cookies as close together as possible to get the biggest yield, and set them 1 inch apart on the lined baking sheets. Repeat with the other half of dough. Gather the scraps into a loose ball. You may need to chill them briefly if they're too soft to re-roll. Roll the scraps and cut more cookies.

Refrigerate half the cut cookies. Depending on their size, use a small biscuit cutter or the tip of a size 3 pastry nozzle to cut holes in the remaining cookies. Bake all the cookies until firm to the touch and light golden brown, 10 to 15 min., depending on size. The perforated cookies will brown faster.

Fill the cookies—Fill a pastry bag fitted with a size 3 tip with the cooled lemon curd. When the cookies have cooled, dust the perforated shapes with confectioners' sugar. Flip over the shapes without holes and pipe about 1½ to 2 tsp. of curd over them. Set the perforated cookies on top of the filled cookies, matching up similar shapes to make sandwiches, pressing gently to spread the lemon curd.

Save a task like filling the butter cookies with lemon curd for last, and let a helpful, early-arriving guest share in the preparation.



These lemon-curd cookies help balance rich, chocolatey flavors with sweet, tart ones.

Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce

To prepare your fluted bundt pan, brush on melted butter and let it set for a minute in the freezer before flouring. Serves twelve.

FOR THE CAKE:

1 cup whole milk
8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter
15¾ oz. (3½ cups) unbleached all-purpose flour
5 tsp. baking powder
1 Tbs. ground ginger
¾ tsp. white pepper
4 extra-large eggs
1¾ cups packed dark brown sugar
¼ cup molasses
2 Tbs. freshly grated ginger

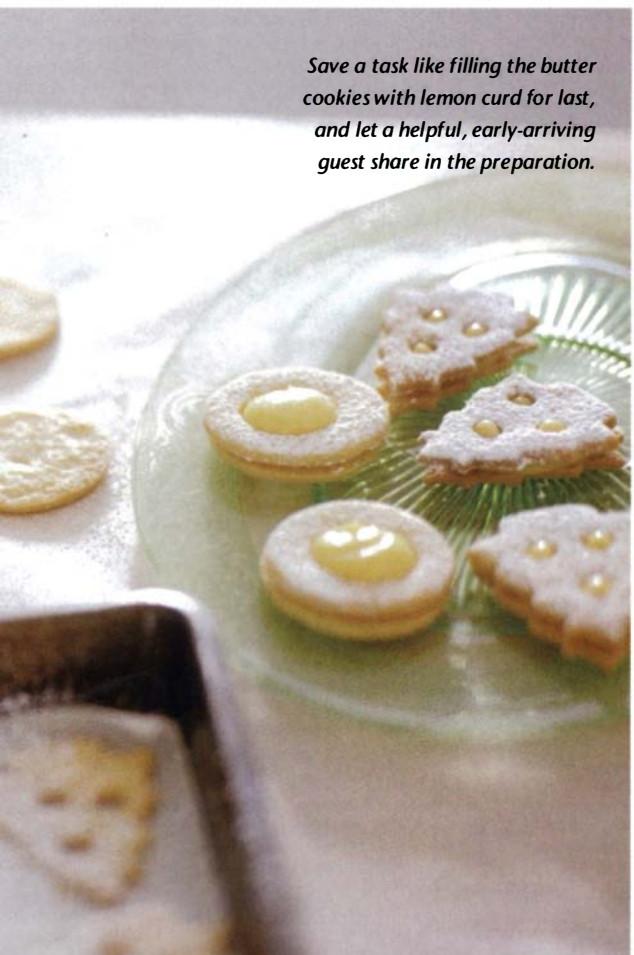
FOR THE APPLESAUCE:

6 large Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into 1-inch chunks
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
½ cup water
¾ cup sugar
2 vanilla beans, split lengthwise and scraped clean, pods and contents reserved

FOR THE FRUIT COMPOTE:

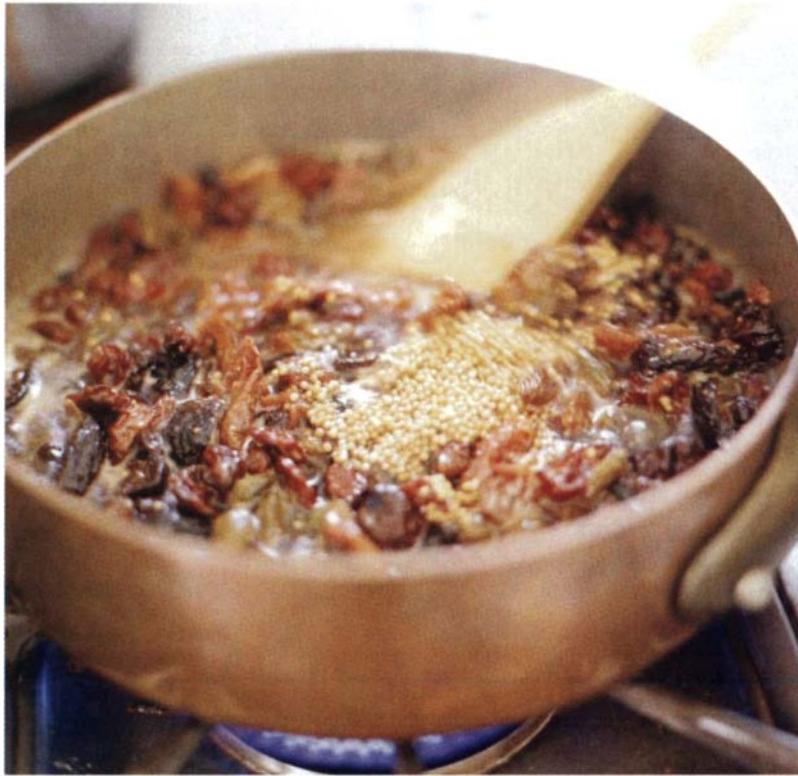
3 Tbs. white-wine vinegar
4½ tsp. yellow mustard seeds
1 cup sugar
1¼ cups water
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and scraped clean, pod and contents reserved
2-inch piece ginger, unpeeled, cut into 4 long slices
1 cup dried apricots, cut into thin strips
1 cup dried Black Mission figs, quartered
1 cup fresh grapefruit juice
1 cup currants
¾ cup golden raisins
¾ cup dried sour cherries
1½ oz. (3 Tbs.) unsalted butter

Bake the cake—Butter and flour an 11-cup bundt





Use the back of your paring knife to scrape out every smidgen of pulp from a vanilla bean.



Nearly any variety of dried fruits can compose a dried fruit compote. Mustard seeds and a dash of vinegar add texture and bite.

pan. Set the rack in the bottom third of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. In a small saucepan, heat the milk and butter over medium heat until the butter has melted; set aside to cool.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, ground ginger, and white pepper. With an electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat the eggs and brown sugar until thick and pale, about 5 min. Reduce the speed to low, add the molasses and fresh ginger; mix until just combined. Add the melted butter mixture and the dry ingredients, beating just until combined. The batter will be fairly thin. Turn the batter into the prepared pan and bake until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean, 55 to 60 min. Cool completely before unmolding. The cake should be quite moist.

Make the applesauce—In a large nonreactive saucepan, combine the apples, butter, lemon juice, water, ½ cup of the sugar, and the vanilla pod and scrapings. (You'll be reserving ¼ cup of the sugar to correct for sweetness after cooking.) Cover tightly and boil for 4 min. to start softening the apples. Remove pan from heat and let it sit, covered, for 25 min., until the apples fall apart when pressed with a spoon. If they're not tender enough, cover the pan again, return to a boil, and allow the apples to sit (covered) off the heat for another 10 min. Remove and discard the vanilla bean pods, and whisk the applesauce just until smooth. Taste and adjust for sweetness if necessary. You should have about 4½ cups of applesauce.

Prepare the compote—In a small nonreactive saucepan, heat the vinegar just until it simmers. Add the mustard seeds, remove the pan from heat, and let the seeds steep for at least 20 min.

In a large nonreactive saucepan, bring the sugar and water to a boil over medium heat. Add the vanilla scrapings and pod and the ginger pieces; boil for 3 min. Reduce the heat to medium; add the apricots and figs and cook until softened, 4 to 5 min. Add the grapefruit juice, currants, raisins, and cherries. Reduce the heat to low and let the compote simmer until the fruit is fork-tender, about 20 min. Make sure that enough liquid remains so the compote stays pourable. If it becomes too dry, add water and gently return to a boil. Remove the pan from the heat. Whisk in the butter, vinegar, and mustard seeds and set the compote aside. Remove the vanilla bean and ginger slices before serving.

If you've made compote ahead, reheat it over medium heat just enough to warm it, taking care not to evaporate the liquid. Drizzle the warm compote over a slice of ginger cake and serve with a generous dollop of applesauce on the side.

Chocolate Steamed Pudding

Steaming lends a creamy texture and brings out the chocolate's deep richness. Make sure the prunes are moist ones. Pudding molds with latched tops are best for steaming, but if you don't have them, use molds with aluminum foil crimped tightly over the top. *Yields two puddings, each serving twelve.*

FOR THE FUDGE SWIRL:

1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1/2 cup plus 1 Tbs. water
3/4 cup Dutch-processed cocoa
2 1/2 tsp. instant coffee
8 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
3 Tbs. Cognac or brandy

FOR THE PUDDING:

1/2 cup Dutch-processed cocoa; more for dusting
1/2 cup water
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 tsp. instant espresso powder
6 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped
1/2 cup sour cream



Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce is an appealing mix of spicy, sweet, and tart.

Chocolate Steamed Pudding has a creamy texture, thanks to its fudge swirl filling and prolonged steaming, which brings out chocolate's deep richness.



**8 oz. (16 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup lightly packed light brown sugar
6 oz. almond paste
8 eggs, separated
2 cups pitted prunes, chopped
10 oz. (2 1/4 cups) all-purpose flour, sifted
2 1/2 tsp. baking soda dissolved in 2 Tbs. boiling water
1/4 cup sugar
Crème fraîche for garnish**

Prepare the fudge swirl—In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the sugar, corn syrup, water, cocoa, and coffee; bring to a boil. Cook 1 to 2 min., stirring constantly to prevent burning on the bottom. Remove the pan from heat and whisk in the chocolate until melted and smooth. Stir in the brandy and set aside to cool. Refrigerate the swirl if you won't be using it that day.

Make the pudding—Choose 2 stockpots large enough to accommodate the pudding molds. Set a trivet at the bottom of each pot. Fill the pots with water and bring to a boil. (If you can only do one pudding at a time, refrigerate the other until you're ready to steam it).

Brush two 8-cup molds with melted butter and let them set for a minute in the freezer; dust with cocoa. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, whisk together the water, cocoa, and buttermilk. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly until the cocoa is dissolved. Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the espresso powder and chocolate, mixing until the chocolate has melted. Add the sour cream; set aside to cool.

With an electric mixer, beat the butter on low speed. As it starts to soften, increase the speed to medium and beat until smooth, 1 to 2 min. Beat in the brown sugar, almond paste, egg yolks, prunes, the chocolate mixture, half the flour, the baking soda mixture, and finish with the remaining flour. Set aside.

With an electric mixer on low speed, beat the egg whites until frothy. Increase the speed to medium and beat until soft peaks form. Increase the speed to high and gradually beat in the sugar until stiff, glossy peaks form. Quickly fold half the egg whites into the chocolate mixture, and then gently but thoroughly add the other half. Drizzle the fudge swirl onto the mixture, folding only once or twice to marble the batter, leaving large streaks of fudge.

Pour half the batter into each pudding mold; it should come to 1 1/2 inches below the mold's rim. Latch the molds securely and set them into the hot water on top of the trivets. The water should reach halfway up the sides of the mold. Cover the pots and steam the puddings over medium heat until they're firm to the touch, about 90 min. After 30 min., check the water level; it should never fall below halfway down the mold. Add more water if needed. Cool the puddings in their molds on a rack for 20 min. before inverting and unmolding them. Slice the pudding and serve it warm or at room temperature with a dollop of *crème fraîche*. *(Recipes continue)*

A dessert party planner makes the menu manageable

UP TO 2 WEEKS AHEAD

- ◆ Assemble and freeze the cheese coin dough
- ◆ Assemble and freeze the butter cookie dough
- ◆ Cook and refrigerate the fudge swirl
- ◆ Assemble and freeze the cranberry tartlet dough

UP TO 3 DAYS AHEAD

- ◆ Cook the lemon curd
- ◆ Cook the applesauce

- ◆ Cook the cranberry tartlet filling
- ◆ Transfer the doughs from the freezer to the refrigerator

2 DAYS AHEAD

- ◆ Make the fruit compote

1 DAY AHEAD

- ◆ Bake the cheese coins
- ◆ Bake the butter cookies
- ◆ Bake the ginger cake

THE MORNING OF THE PARTY

- ◆ Assemble and steam the chocolate puddings
- ◆ Assemble the tartlets

JUST BEFORE THE PARTY

- ◆ Assemble the cookies
- ◆ Bake the tartlets

DURING THE PARTY

- ◆ Replenish and reheat the desserts as needed



"Savory touches as a foil for the sweet are a must," says Nancy Silverton. She likes experimenting with different seed and spice coatings for Cheese Coins.



A cranberry tartlet and cheese coins show that a dessert menu doesn't have to be relentlessly sugary.

Cranberry Tartlets

You can find dried cranberries in specialty stores and in some supermarkets. The filled tartlets can be refrigerated until you're ready to bake them. Yields 36 tartlets.

FOR THE CRUST:

*1½ oz. (3 cups) unbleached pastry or unbleached all-purpose flour; more for dusting
½ cup plus 1 Tbs. sugar
12 oz. (24 Tbs.) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small pieces
4½ tsp. vanilla extract combined with 3 Tbs. cold water*

FOR THE FILLING:

*1½ cups sugar
1 cup water
1 vanilla bean split lengthwise and scraped clean, pod and contents reserved
1 cinnamon stick
2 cups fresh cranberries
1¾ cups dried cranberries
½ cups orange juice
2 Tbs. cornstarch, dissolved in 2 Tbs. water*

Make the crust—With an electric mixer or in a food processor fitted with a metal blade, combine the flour and sugar thoroughly. Add the butter and blend just to the consistency of coarse cornmeal.

Pour the vanilla and water mixture into the flour mixture. Process briefly to combine. You may need to add up to 2 Tbs. more water to the dough so that it comes together. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead just until it forms a smooth ball. Flatten into a disk, seal in plastic wrap, and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

Make the filling—In a large nonreactive saucepan over medium heat, combine the sugar, water, vanilla pod and scrapings, and the cinnamon stick, stirring just until the sugar dissolves. Bring to a boil. Once the mixture comes to a boil, do not stir. During the first few minutes of boiling, sugar crystals will be thrown onto the sides of the pan; wash them down with a pastry brush dipped in water, or cover the pan for 2 to 3 min. to let condensation wash the crystals down. When the mixture starts to color, after 4 to 5 min., swirl the pan gently to ensure

even coloring. Continue to cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the mixture turns a medium caramel color, about 2 min. Watch closely—this can happen quickly.

Remove the pan from heat. Add the fresh and dried cranberries and the orange juice. The mixture will spatter and part of it may seize and harden. Cook about 10 min., until any hardened parts have dissolved and the cranberries have swelled. Remove the pan from the heat and let the mixture sit for about 30 min. to allow the fruit to absorb the juices.

Set a large, fine strainer over a large mixing bowl and strain the fruit filling. You should get about 1¾ cups juice. Pour the juice back into saucepan and put the fruit in a mixing bowl. Bring the juice to a boil and slowly whisk in the cornstarch mixture. Cook for another 2 min. until shiny, bubbly, and slightly thickened. Stir this into the fruit. Allow the filling to cool; discard the vanilla bean and the cinnamon stick. You'll have about 3 cups filling.

Assemble the tartlets—Cut the dough in half; refrigerate one half. On a lightly floured work surface; roll out the other half so it's ¼ inch thick. Using a 3½-inch round cutter, or a template such as a saucer or jar lid, cut out 18 rounds. Gently press the rounds into 2-inch mini muffin tins; repair any tears in the dough. Fill with 1 generous tablespoon of filling, and gently press the dough edges toward the center to make a rustic finish. Refrigerate the filled tartlets while you reroll the dough scraps with the other half of the dough and make the remaining tartlets.

Set the oven racks in their top and bottom positions, and heat the oven to 375°F. Bake the tartlets until the crust is golden brown, 25 to 28 min. Rotate the pans halfway through to ensure even baking. Allow the tartlets to cool in the muffin tins for about 10 min. Carefully lift them from the pans with a cake spatula. To reheat, warm in a hot oven for 1 to 2 min.

Nancy Silverton is a baker, pastry chef, and co-owner of the La Brea Bakery and Campanile in Los Angeles. She's the author of several books, including *Desserts* (Harper & Row, 1986). ♦

Wine Choices

Sweet dishes need sweet wines, so save that dry Champagne for savories



For a wine to taste its best with desserts, be sure it's at least as sweet as the dish. Sugar in food can wipe out a wine's character and turn it sour or bitter. Try this yourself with a sugar cube: the effects are dramatic.

The dishes in this menu are certainly varied, but if you're going to pick one all-purpose dessert wine, my favorite is Quady's Essensia, which mates well with everything from fruit to nuts to chocolate.

If you're making a few of these recipes or want to zero in on specific pairings, match the overall intensity of the wine to the intensity of the dessert and fine-tune your choice around flavors you want to bring out.

Late-harvest Gewürztraminer or Riesling go nicely with the ginger cake and other spicy-sweet dishes with light-colored fruits; try Chateau St. Jean or Wente. With fruit desserts that don't call for spice, consider Sauternes, or

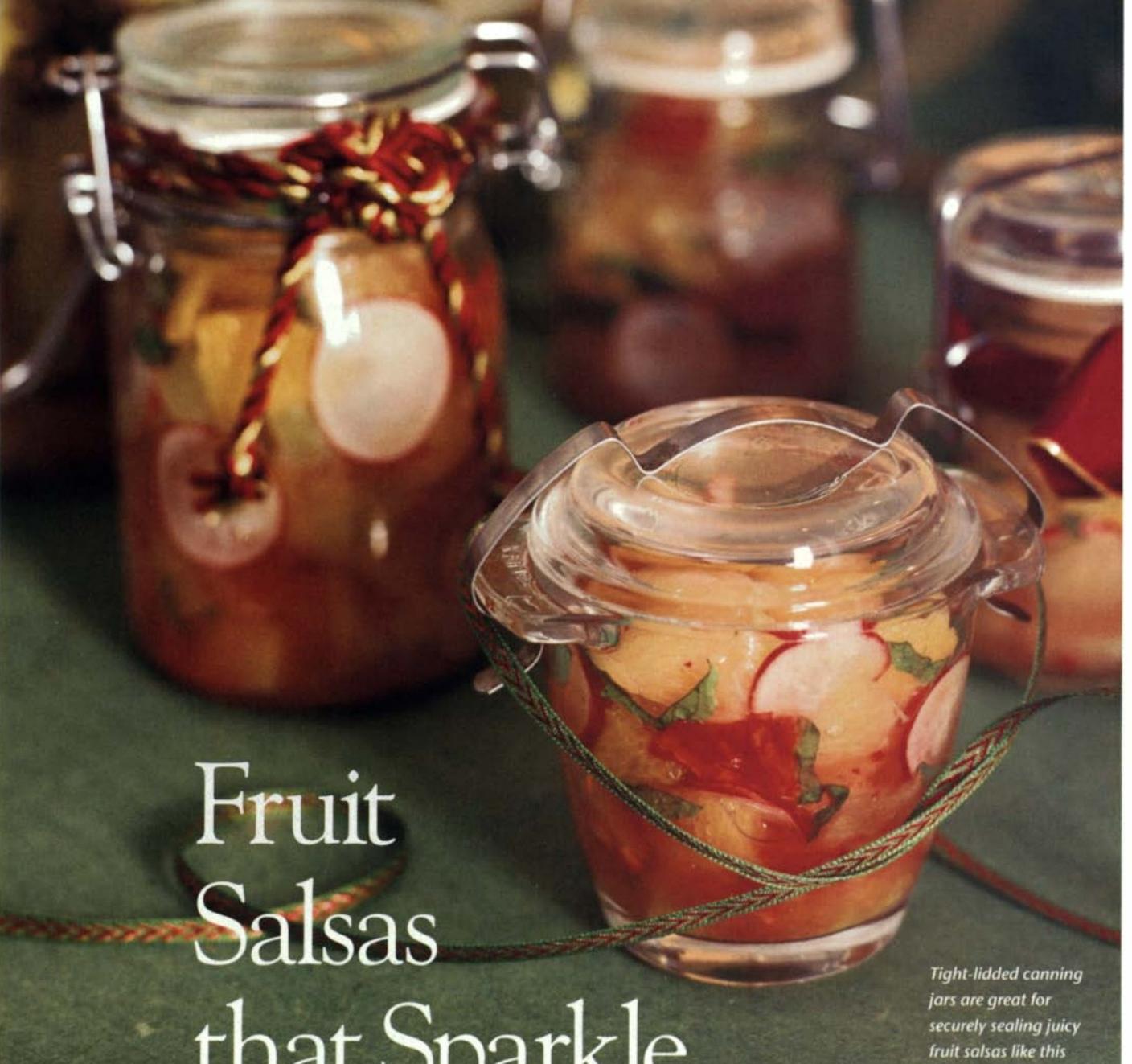
its California equivalent—Ferrari-Carano's Eldorado Gold and Far Niente's Dolce, though expensive, are among the best.

The Chocolate Steamed Pudding wants the full-flavored partner you'll find in a port. Sandeman Founder's and Graham's Six Grapes will echo the pudding's chocolate, coffee, almond, and dried fruit flavors, and they're priced well.

If you want to serve bubbly, follow a few guidelines. Pick one

with some sweetness and sip it with lighter dishes, such as the lemon-curd cookies and fruit tartlets. Asti Gancia and Asti Cinzano, both Muscat-based, would work well. Beware strong, dark flavors in desserts—

chocolate, coffee, and spice can kill the taste of a delicate sparkler and make it taste like soda water. Rosina Tinari Wilson, a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, is a food and wine writer and teacher based in the San Francisco area.



Fruit Salsas that Sparkle

Tight-lidded canning jars are great for securely sealing juicy fruit salsas like this Citrus Salsa.

Use your grocer's produce section as a rich resource for vibrant, homemade holiday gifts

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

Every year around this time, I start racking my brain for a delicious, original concoction to make for holiday gifts. I want something festive yet easy, clever yet practical, and fetching yet not too expensive to make. A tall order, but this year the idea came to me easily: inventive, colorful fruit salsas meet every one of my criteria.

SALSAS ARE EASY TO MAKE AND TO GIVE

These recipes yield about enough to fill two one-pint jars, and they're easily doubled, depending on the length of your gift list. No fancy equipment or extensive kitchen time is needed. Salsas can be



Crosshatching makes a neat dice. To dice a mango, slice off the flesh from both sides of the pit, score in a crisscross pattern, and cut away the tiny cubes of mango.

made in less than an hour and are ready to give at a second's notice. And best of all, they're delicious.

Salsa experiments rarely go wrong. Trying all sorts of ingredient combinations is good fun. You'll stay on the right track if you keep in mind the foods your friends like to prepare, and then match flavor combinations accordingly.

A salsa should always complement a main dish. I think of salsa as the best supporting performer in a play: never upstaging the leading players. Tropical fruits and roasted red peppers team well with poultry or firm-fleshed fish. Citrus fruits make a beautiful sweet-tart salsa that's right with any fish, hot or cold. Cranberry salsa is a refreshing take on the traditional

accompaniment to a roasted bird. The salsa's flavors are strong, yet when teamed with a turkey dinner or sandwich, they blend gracefully and don't overwhelm.

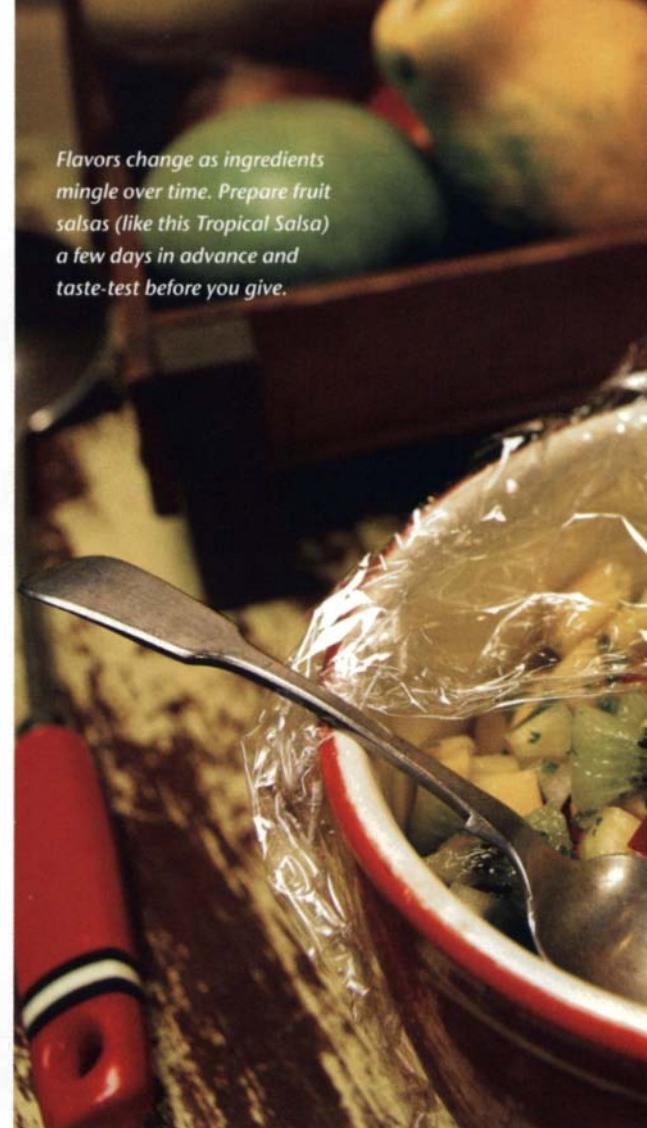
CHOOSE WELL-RIPENED PRODUCE

Once I develop a combination, I search for the best produce I can find. The fruit doesn't have to be the rarest or most expensive, just well ripened. Trust your senses and you'll make good choices. Fully ripened papaya should be golden yellow, firm, and supple when pressed. Sweet pineapple will be fragrant and tinged with yellow and orange; stay away from green ones. Citrus should feel heavy for its size.

DEVELOP FLAVORS BY MAKING SALSA AHEAD

These salsa recipes are very forgiving—a little extra jalapeño or more papaya and less mango, for example, will be just fine. Tailor the ingredient proportions to suit your taste buds, and always taste-test before you transfer the salsas to gift jars, because their flavors develop and change over time. Preparing a salsa a couple of days in advance will give you better insight into its true character and will allow time for seasoning adjustments.

Flavors change as ingredients mingle over time. Prepare fruit salsas (like this Tropical Salsa) a few days in advance and taste-test before you give.



**Don't bother
actually canning
these salsas—
the heat would
dull their flavors.**

Choose containers with economy in mind: a little salsa goes a long way, and giving in small, one-cup quantities means more jars per batch. The vessels you pick for these juicy salsas must have tight-fitting lids. Dress up plain jars with pretty ribbons and attractive tags. Never prepare or store fruit salsas in aluminum.

I'd advise against canning these salsas: canning would cause the fresh flavors to dull when exposed to heat. Instead, run the jars and lids through the dishwasher before you fill them and then stash the salsas in the fridge. They'll keep for two to three weeks.

Citrus Salsa

If the citrus sections and radishes seem unwieldy, you can chop them for a more traditional salsa look. This one is great served with fish. Yields 3½ cups.

- 2 blood oranges**
- 2 navel oranges**
- 1 pink grapefruit**
- 1 lime**
- ¾ cup thinly sliced radishes**
- 1 fresh red chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced**
- 2 to 3 Tbs. minced mint leaves**
- Pinch salt**
- Pinch cayenne**

Remove the zest and pith from the oranges, grapefruit, and lime. With a sharp knife, carefully cut the citrus



"These salsas are so pretty that I don't even wrap them when I give them as gifts," says author Abby Dodge.

*1/4 cup honey
1/2 cup sugar
1 serrano chile, stemmed, seeded, and minced
1 tsp. minced orange zest
2 Tbs. fresh orange juice
1 Tbs. canola oil
Pinch salt*

Chop the cranberries, or pulse them in a food processor until coarse. Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl and toss gently. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Abigail Johnson Dodge is a recipe consultant, a food stylist, and Fine Cooking's recipe tester. Her book on fruit desserts will be published this spring by Rizzoli International. ♦

Cranberry-Pear Salsa is a new take on an old favorite, and you can serve it just the same way.



sections from the membranes over a bowl, letting the bowl catch the juices. Coarsely chop each section, add the remaining ingredients, and gently toss together. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Tropical Salsa

This is one of my favorite toppers for grilled chicken or fish. Yields 4½ cups.

*1 cup diced mango (1 large mango)
1 cup diced papaya (1 large papaya)
1/3 cup diced kiwi (2 small kiwis)
1 cup diced pineapple
1/3 cup diced red bell pepper
1/4 cup diced red onion
1/4 cup packed cilantro leaves, minced
1 or 2 jalapeños, stemmed, seeded, and minced
1 Tbs. lime juice
Pinch salt
Pinch cayenne*

Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl and toss gently. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Cranberry-Pear Salsa

Delicious with tortilla chips, this salsa is even better on turkey sandwiches. Yields 4½ cups.

*12 oz. fresh cranberries
1½ cups coarsely chopped pears (about 2 medium pears)
1/2 cup diced green bell pepper*



A Perfectly Baked Potato

Piercing the outside before baking ensures a fluffy inside

Oven baking produces light, fluffy potatoes, while baking in foil or in the microwave can leave potatoes soggy.

BY MOLLY STEVENS

When it comes to basic cooking skills, baking a potato may be right up there with boiling water. But unlike the latter, an aura of mystery about how best to bake a potato persists. The ideal—a fluffy, light, and white center surrounded by a crisp, papery skin—isn't difficult to achieve. In fact, the more you work at making the best baked potato—wrapping it in foil, impaling it with skewers, baking it on a bed of salt—the more likely you are to come away disappointed.

EENY, MEENY, MINEY, MO— PICK THE BEST POTATO

Using the right variety of potato makes a huge difference in the flavor and texture of a baked potato. What you're looking for is one with a high starch content, often called a "mealy" potato. The starchier the potato, the more the inside swells and puffs up as it bakes, leaving it light, dry, and delicate.

Choose potatoes with these names on the label: russet, russet Burbank, or Idaho. Round white potatoes and yellow varieties such as Yellow Finn and Yukon Gold are considered all-purpose potatoes. They have a moderate starch

content and will do in a pinch. Stay away from low-starch potatoes, also called waxy potatoes, which will end up soggy and dense when baked. Don't use potatoes labeled Red Bliss, red, round red, or long white.

Look for skin that's smooth and tight. Avoid potatoes with shriveled or cracked skin or with soft, spongy spots. If the eyes have sprouted, or if there are green spots under the skin, the potato was improperly stored, and its quality may have suffered.

Choose potatoes close in size so that they'll cook evenly. A russet generally weighs $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound—enough for one

or two servings, depending on how you prepare it.

The best seasons for russets are late summer through winter, but modern cultivation and storing methods ensure good-quality potatoes year-round.

Unless you have a root cellar that holds food between 45° and 50°F, plan to store your potatoes for no more than a couple of weeks. They're best kept away from light in a basket or bag that allows air to circulate. Don't store them next to onions; side by side, they shorten each other's shelf life.

WASH AND BAKE

One of the joys of baking a potato is the sheer simplicity of it. Your only goal is to make sure the potato loses enough moisture during cooking to leave you with a light potato, not a soggy one.

All you really need to do is scrub the potato, pierce it, and bake it right on the rack of a hot oven. Stabbing the potato several times with the tines of a fork before baking allows moisture to escape, which gives you a light, dry interior. Some cooks claim it's better to pierce the skin after 20 minutes of baking, but I find that it makes no difference to the potato's taste or texture. It is easier to pierce a partially cooked potato, however, so you may want to try that method.

While many cooks swear by skewering potatoes or nesting them on a bed of salt as they bake, I don't bother with either. Skewering the potato may shave about 10 minutes off your baking time, so if you're in a rush, it might be the way to go. Laying potatoes on a bed of coarse salt will draw out excess moisture, but that's only important if you're using less starchy potatoes that won't dry out on their own.

If you like the potato skin crisp, leave it alone. If you like a softer, pliable jacket, lightly rub the skin with a little olive oil, butter, or lard before baking; this will also add a little flavor to the potato.

Once the potatoes are in the oven, there isn't much to do except turn them every 15 to 20 minutes to ensure that they bake evenly.



Poke small holes all over the potato to allow some moisture to escape. This makes the potato's flesh fluffy and dry.

Potatoes won't really bake in foil or in the microwave. While both methods may shorten cooking time, neither allows moisture to escape. Foil traps the moisture so the potato steams rather than bakes, leaving the interior dense and gummy. Likewise, the microwave keeps potatoes moist.

OVEN TEMPERATURE CAN ADAPT TO THE REST OF THE MEAL

You can bake potatoes at 325° to 475°F; they'll just take more or less time. If you have a roast in the oven, simply bake your potatoes at the same temperature that the meat requires. The temperatures and times in the chart below are a guide. To test baked potatoes for doneness, squeeze them with an oven mitt or kitchen towel. When they give slightly and feel soft, they're done.

For best flavor and texture, serve the baked potato immediately. A perfectly baked potato won't stay that way for long. If allowed to sit, it will quickly go limp.

Lightly massage the potato just before cutting it open to loosen the inside, making it fluffier. Then slit the top and push

TEMPERATURES AND TIMES FOR BAKED POTATOES

For a medium-sized (8- to 10-ounce) potato,

bake it at for

325°F	1 hour and 30 minutes
350°F	1 hour and 15 minutes
375°F	1 hour
400°F	45 to 50 minutes
425°F	40 to 45 minutes

on both ends to plump the flesh. Drop in a pat of butter, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and grab a fork. Baked russets are notoriously thirsty and will soak up as much butter and sour cream as you want to use. I also like to top them with salsa, seasoned yogurt, or fresh vegetables.

Molly Stevens keeps a ready store of russet potatoes in the root cellar at her home in Vermont. She is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. ♦

Twice-baked potatoes make a meal

If you can't serve baked potatoes right away, or if you want to dress them up a bit, consider the classic twice-baked method.

Begin with a baked potato.

Cut the cooked potato lengthwise in half or just cut off the top. Scoop out the flesh, being careful not to scoop so deeply that the jacket falls apart. Use a food mill or potato masher to mash the flesh—a food processor or mixer would make it gluey—and add milk, cream, butter, sour cream, yogurt, cheese, olive oil, or any combination of these to get a creamy, smooth consistency. From there, use your imagination to mix and match flavorings. Here are some of my favorite combinations:

- ◆ smoked trout, chopped scallions, fresh dill, horseradish, sour cream, and capers;
- ◆ roasted garlic, goat cheese, fresh thyme, olive oil, and black olives, with a topping of grated Parmesan;
- ◆ crabmeat, chives, sour cream, Cheddar cheese, corn, chopped onion, and red pepper;
- ◆ crumbled bacon, sautéed kale and leeks, minced garlic, milk, and caraway seed.

And bake it again.

Spoon the well-seasoned potato mixture back into the jackets, mounding the filling without compressing it too much, top with grated cheese if you want a browned crust, and bake for 15 minutes at 375°F. These potatoes can be prepared ahead and refrigerated for a few days, or even frozen. In either case, allow 40 to 45 minutes to reheat cold potatoes. Serve one half as a side dish or a whole potato as a main course.





One Stock Makes Three Flavorful Fish Stews

Mastering the fish-stock base lets you easily make a creamy chowder, a tangy salmon soup, or a hot and spicy court bouillon

BY KATHERINE ALFORD

Seafood aficionados claim that there are as many fish stews as there are cooks, but despite the vast variety of recipes, they all have one thing in common: a base of good fish stock. Whether fragrant and spicy, thick and creamy, or simple and brothy, a fish stew needs fish stock.

Fortunately, this important component takes very little time to make (less than an hour), and it freezes well so you can always have it on hand. With a quart or two in the freezer, it's easy to cook up your own favorite fish soup or stew.

GOOD STOCK NEEDS GOOD BONES

Fish stock is made by gently cooking fish bones, heads, and other fish trimmings with aromatic vegetables in water. The heads, a rich source of gelatin, contribute body and depth of flavor, but if you can't get them, you can still make a fine stock

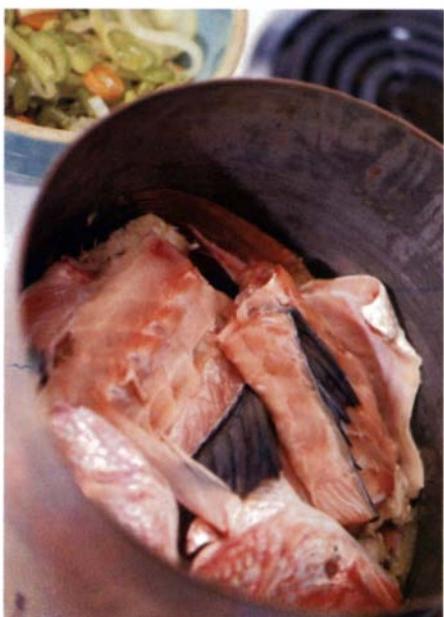
with just bones. Scraps of fillet are always a welcome addition, but don't use the skin or gills: these turn stock gray and bitter.

The best fish bones for stock are those from fish with sweet, white flesh, such as flounder, sole, sea bass, snapper, or cod. Avoid bones from strongly flavored, oil-rich fish, such as salmon, bluefish, and mackerel.

Shop for bones the same way you shop for fish—with your nose. Fresh fish bones smell clean and sweet, not strong or fishy. A good fish store that fillets fish daily is usually your best bet for fresh bones. Today, however, as supermarkets replace neighborhood fishmongers, buying good fish bones can be the most taxing part of the recipe. Here are a couple of strategies I use to get what I need.

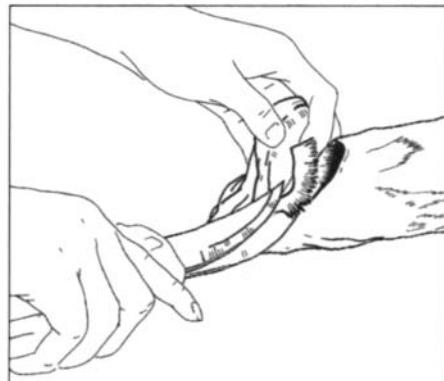
◆ Consider buying whole fish whenever possible and freezing the bones until you have enough to make stock. Filleting fish yourself isn't difficult and promises a fresher fillet. Or, ask the fish department to do it for you and to give you the bones in a separate bag. Clean them thoroughly, seal them in plastic, and freeze if you're not making stock right away. They'll last for three to four months.

◆ Anytime you prepare shrimp or lobster, freeze the shells and lobster bodies and add them to your next fish stock. They're a great flavor enhancer for the basic stock.

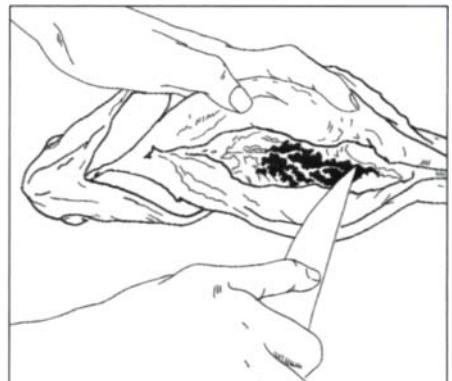


Choose bones from mild white fish, such as sole, snapper, or cod, and cook them for a few minutes before adding the wine and water.

First things first: clean the bones thoroughly



Snip the reddish gills from the head with scissors or a knife.



Scrape any dark tissue from the backbone area with the tip of a knife.

CLEAN BONES MEAN BETTER FLAVOR

Carefully cleaned bones will produce a stock with the flavor of a clean ocean breeze. Skip this step and you'll wind up with something that tastes more like low tide. Begin by pulling away any remaining viscera or eggs. Then, with a knife or kitchen shears, remove the reddish gills from the head. At the top of the stomach cavity there are often traces of purplish tissue that must be cleaned out; the tip of a knife works well to scrape this area clean. When everything is clean, break the skeleton into smaller pieces and rinse the bones under cold water until the water runs clear.

AROMATICS ADD FLAVOR, TOO

In addition to the standard trinity of carrots, onions, and celery, the white part of a leek and a bit of fennel are classic aromatics for fish stock. Some cooks further modify the mix by omitting the celery (because of its strong flavor) or the carrots (because they lend a golden hue to the stock). Mushrooms can give fish stock an earthy flavor; a tomato contributes bright acid and a rosy color. Cut the vegetables into small pieces so they'll cook in the relatively brief time the stock simmers.

GENTLE HEAT COAXES THE BEST FROM ALL THE INGREDIENTS

Sweating is the gentle process of low-heat sautéing in butter or oil to enhance the sweetness and extract the juices from the ingredients. When sweating vegetables, cover the pot to help retain all the juices and prevent browning.



Instead of using a traditional stockpot, which is taller than it is wide, use a wide soup kettle to make cooking the bones easier. Sweat the vegetables first. When they've softened, either push them aside or remove them to clear the stage for cooking the bones. Turn up the heat to medium-high and lay the bones in the pot. After a minute or two, when they begin to turn white, flip them with tongs or a wooden spoon to cook the other side.

When both sides are cooked, add a splash of dry white wine (to give the finished stock a touch of acid) and just enough water to cover the bones. If you've removed the aromatic vegetables, return them to the pot.

As the liquid comes to the boil, a grayish foam will rise to the top. Skim this and reduce the heat to the barest simmer. The stove is set at just the right temperature if you watch the stock for a minute and see only a few bubbles burst on the surface. Continue to skim the stock as it simmers gently.

After thirty minutes, the stock should smell sweet and concentrated.

Overcooked fish stock is a bitter broth, so keep an eye on the pot. Strain the stock and chill it by pouring it into unbreakable containers and setting them in icy water for 20 minutes or so. As the stock chills, a cloudy layer of residual protein may fall to the bottom of the container. It won't interfere with the flavor, but if you're after a clear broth, hold this back when adding the stock to your recipe. Fish stock will last for two days in the refrigerator or three to four months in the freezer. Thawed stock can be refrozen without harm.

Since each fish stew recipe requires only a few cups of homemade fish stock, I make a big batch and freeze it in small containers for later use. Then when I get the urge for a creamy chowder or spicy Louisiana court bouillon, all I need is a bit of fresh fish and some inspiration.

THREE OF MY FAVORITE FISH STEWS

Depending on your appetite, there are several ways to turn a neutral stock into a flavorful stew. The recipes that follow include three distinct examples: the chowder is richly thickened with cream and flour, while the court bouillon is spicy and hearty with the addition of a dark roux, and the Russian-inspired solianka is brothy and bold with tomatoes and sauerkraut brine. Don't hesitate to substitute and improvise: half the fun of making fish stew is buying what's best at the market and making up the recipe as you go.

Basic Fish Stock

Yields about 9 cups.

- 3 Tbs. olive oil or unsalted butter*
- 1 leek, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced and washed*
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced*
- 1 large rib celery, with leaves, thinly sliced*
- 1 medium carrot, thinly sliced*

One batch of stock makes enough for all three fish stew recipes. Divide the stock into small portions to keep on hand in the freezer.



Creole Court Bouillon is a spicy ragoût of tomatoes, peppers, and snapper. It's thickened with a dark roux and enriched with red wine.

- 2 or 3 large sprigs fresh fennel or 1 tsp. dried fennel seeds**
- 2 lb. cleaned bones of mild fish (sea bass, cod, snapper, flounder), cut into 4- to 5-inch pieces**
- 1 cup dry white wine**
- 4 sprigs flat-leaf parsley**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 4 peppercorns**
- 9 cups cold water**

In a large, broad soup kettle, heat 1½ Tbs. of the oil. Add the leek, onion, celery, carrot, and fennel and cook over medium-low heat, covered, until the vegetables have softened, about 15 min. Stir the vegetables a few times so they don't brown. Remove the vegetables from the pot and set aside. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the remaining 1½ Tbs. oil. Lay the bones as evenly as possible on the bottom of the pot. Cook until the bones turn white, 1 to 2 min. Flip them with tongs or a wooden spoon and cook the other side for 1 to 2 min. Add the wine to the pan and bring to a boil. Return the vegetables to the pot and add the parsley, bay leaf, and peppercorns. Add the water, bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, skim, and cook uncovered 30 min. Strain the stock, discarding the bones and vegetables. Chill the stock if you're not using it immediately.

Creole Court Bouillon

The dark roux that gives this stew its ruddy, down-to-earth flavor is best made in a cast-iron skillet, but any heavy-based pan will do. Serves four.

FOR THE ROUX:

- 2 Tbs. vegetable oil**
- 3 Tbs. flour**

FOR THE COURT BOUILLON:

- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil**
- ½ cup sliced scallions**
- 1 green bell pepper, diced**

(Ingredient list continues)



1 rib celery, with leaves, diced
1 cup diced onion
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup red wine
1 bay leaf
½ tsp. dried thyme
½ tsp. ground allspice
1 tsp. cayenne; more or less to taste
2 cups canned tomatoes, chopped, with juice
2 cups fish stock
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 ¾ lb. snapper fillet (skin removed), cut into 2-inch chunks
2 Tbs. minced flat-leaf parsley

To make a dark roux—In a small, heavy skillet (preferably cast-iron), heat the oil over medium heat. Sift in the flour and cook, whisking frequently, until the mixture turns a rich mahogany brown, 10 to 12 min. Set aside.

To make the court bouillon—In a medium stew pot, heat the oil. Add the scallions, bell pepper, celery, onion, and garlic; sauté over medium heat until softened, about 10 min. Add the wine, bring to a boil, and cook until reduced by half. Whisk in the roux, add the bay leaf, thyme, allspice, cayenne, tomatoes, and stock. Simmer over low heat for 20 min. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper if needed. (Court bouillon can be prepared to this point and held for an hour before serving or refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

When ready to serve, bring the court bouillon to a very low simmer. Add the snapper and cook until the fish is opaque, 5 to 7 min. Add the parsley and ladle the court bouillon into a warmed tureen. Serve immediately.

Seafood Chowder

The rich texture of this chowder is provided by cream and a *beurre manié*, a paste of butter and flour that's whisked into the boiling stock before the seafood is added. Serves four.

FOR THE BEURRE MANIÉ:

1 Tbs. unsalted butter, room temperature
4½ tsp. flour

FOR THE CHOWDER:

4 oz. bacon, cut into ½-inch dice
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1½ cups sliced leeks, white and light green parts only, washed before slicing
1 rib celery, sliced
⅔ cup dry vermouth
2 cups diced red potatoes, skin left on
2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves
2 cups fish stock
1 cup cream
12 medium hard-shell clams (about 1¼ lb.), or 12 mussels (½ to 1½ lb.), or a combination
12 medium shrimp (about ½ lb.), peeled and deveined
12 sea scallops (1 to 1¼ lb.), cut into quarters if large
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Pinch cayenne

To make the beurre manié—In a small bowl, cream the butter and flour with a wooden spoon to make a paste. Set aside.

To make the chowder—In a small pot of boiling water, blanch the bacon 1 to 2 min. to remove excess salt and fat. Drain.

In a medium stew pot, heat the butter, add the leeks, celery, and bacon. Cook over medium heat until the leeks and celery turn a brighter green without browning, about 2 min. Add the vermouth, bring to a boil, and reduce by one-third. Add the potatoes, thyme, and stock and simmer until the potatoes are tender but not mushy, about 7 min.

Bring the soup to a boil and whisk in the *beurre manié* a spoonful at a time. Pour in the cream and let the soup boil until slightly thickened, about 1 min. When ready to serve, add the clams or mussels and cook, covered, until the shells begin to open, about 2 min. for mussels and 5 min. for clams. Add the shrimp, simmer 1 min., and then add the scallops; cook until the scallops are warmed through, about 1 min. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and cayenne. Serve immediately in warmed bowls.

Salmon Solianka

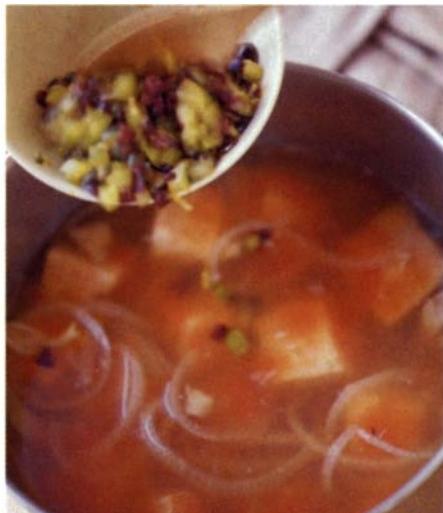
The distinctive flavor of this Russian-inspired soup comes from the brine from a package of fresh sauerkraut—canned won't do. Serves four.

3 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 cups sliced onions
5 cups fish stock
¼ cup tomato purée
1 cup drained sauerkraut juice (from a refrigerated package, not a can)
1 tsp. sugar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. capers
1 Tbs. pitted, minced brine-cured black olives, such as kalamata
2 tsp. minced dill pickle
Zest of 1 lemon, minced
1 Tbs. minced fresh dill, plus 4 sprigs for garnish
½ lb. oyster mushrooms, sliced
1¼ lb. salmon fillet (skin removed), cut into 1-inch chunks

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the onions, cover the pan, and let cook until tender and sweet, about 20 min. Add the fish stock, tomato purée, sauerkraut juice, and sugar and bring to a simmer. Simmer for 10 min. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper if needed. (The soup can be made to this point 1 day ahead and refrigerated.)

In a small bowl, mix together the capers, olives, pickle, and lemon zest. Set aside. When ready to serve, add the minced dill and mushrooms to the broth and simmer 1 min. Reduce the heat, add the salmon, and poach over low heat until cooked through, 4 to 6 min. Add the caper-olive mixture and gently swirl to combine; be careful not to break up the salmon. Ladle the soup into four warmed soup bowls, garnish with dill sprigs, and serve immediately.

Katherine Alford learned to make fish stews while growing up by the ocean from Cape Cod to the Florida Keys. Today she shops for fish in New York City, where she works as a cooking teacher and food writer. ♦



Olives, capers, and lemon zest add zing to tomato-based Salmon Solianka. The briny broth is a perfect match to the rich flavor of salmon.

Creamy Seafood Chowder is rich with scallops, shrimp, clams, and mussels. It's fortified with potatoes and bacon.

Choosing Pots and Pans to Improve Your Cooking

A few well-chosen pieces—starting with a good stockpot and a heavy sauté pan—can make a big difference

BY AMY ALBERT

As a *Fine Cooking* editor, I've had the chance to observe lots of great cooks at work. From them, I've learned plenty—including the fact that good-quality pots and pans made of the right materials really can improve your cooking.

Rather than having a rack filled with pots and pans of all shapes and sizes, owning a few well-chosen pieces will give you the flexibility to cook whatever you want and the performance you need to cook it better.

ADVICE FROM EXPERT COOKS MADE CHOOSING THE BEST PANS EASY

I polled some of our authors to find out which pans were the most valuable to them and why. I then came up with the following selections, starting with the two indispensables shown at right: an anodized-aluminum stockpot to handle stocks, soups, stews, some sauces, blanching, boiling, and steaming; and a high-sided stainless-steel/aluminum sauté pan with a lid for frying, deglazing sauces, braising small items like vegetables, making sautés and fricassées, cooking rice pilafs and risottos, and a whole lot more. The other four pieces I picked (next page) make for even more cooking agility and add up to half a dozen ready-for-action pots and pans that you'll really use.

ALL GOOD PANS SHARE COMMON TRAITS

In a well-stocked kitchen store, you'll see lots of first-rate pots and pans. They may



*Calphalon
8-quart (or
bigger) stockpot, with
lid. Simmer soup or cook a big
batch of tomato sauce in this sturdy,
nonreactive stockpot. It will do double-
duty for boiling pasta and steaming
vegetables, too.*

*All-Clad 3-quart sauté pan,
with lid. Stainless coating with
aluminum sandwiched all the
way through makes for a respon-
sive, durable, attractive pan. Great
for frying, deglazing, and, of course,
sauté. And it goes from stove to oven.*

look different, but they all share essential qualities you should look for.

Look for heavy-gauge materials.

Thinner-gauge materials spread and hold heat unevenly, and their bottoms are more likely to dent and warp. This means that food can scorch. Absolutely flat bottoms are particularly important if your stovetop element is electric. Heavy-gauge pans deliver heat more evenly (see sidebar opposite).

To decide if a pan is heavy enough, lift it, look at the thickness of the walls and base, and rap it with your knuckles—do you hear a light ping or a dull thud? A thud is good in this case.

You'll want handles and a lid that are sturdy, heatproof, and secure. Handles come welded, riveted, or screwed. Some cooks advise against welded handles because they can break off. But Gayle Novacek, cookware buyer for Sur La

Table, has seen few such cases. As long as handles are welded in several spots, they can be preferable to riveted ones because residue is apt to collect around a rivet.

Many pans have metal handles that stay relatively cool when the pan is on the stove because the handle is made of a metal that's a poor heat conductor and retainer, such as stainless steel. Plastic and wooden handles stay cool, too, but they're not ovenproof. Heat- or



ovenproof handles mean that dishes started on the stovetop can be finished in the oven.

All lids should fit tightly to keep in moisture. The lid, too, should have a heatproof handle. Glass lids, which you'll find on certain brands, are usually oven-safe only up to 350°F.

A pan should feel comfortable.

"When you're at the store, pantomime the way you'd use a pot or pan to find out if it's right for you," advises *Fine Cooking* contributing editor and chef Molly Stevens. If you find a pan you love but you aren't completely comfortable with the handle, you can buy a rubber gripper to slip over the handle. Just remember that grippers aren't ovenproof.

SOME PANS NEED SPECIAL TALENTS

Depending on what you'll be cooking in the pan, you may also need to look for other attributes.

For sautéing and other cooking that calls for quick temperature changes, a pan should be responsive. This means that the pan is doing what the heat source tells it to, and pronto. For example, if you sauté garlic just until fragrant and then turn down the flame, the pan should cool down quickly so the garlic doesn't burn. Responsiveness isn't as crucial for boiling, steaming, or the long, slow cooking that stocks and stews undergo.

For sautéing and oven roasts, it helps if the pan heats evenly up the sides. When you've got a pan full of chicken breasts nestling against the pan sides, you want them all to cook quickly and evenly, so heat coming from the sides of the pan is important. Even heat up the sides of a pot is important for pot roasting, too. Paul Bertolli, *Fine Cooking*

contributing editor and chef of Oliveto restaurant in Oakland, California, counts on his enameled cast-iron oval casserole by Le Creuset for braising meat because "it's a snug, closed cooking chamber with even heat radiating off the sides for really good browning." Bertolli finds that meat fits especially well into the oval shape.

For cooking acidic foods, such as tomato sauces, wine sauces, and fruit fillings, a pan's lining should be non-reactive. Stainless steel, enamel, and anodized aluminum won't react no matter what they touch, while plain aluminum can discolor white sauces and foods that are acidic, sulfurous, or alkaline. It can even make those foods taste metallic. Eggs, vegetables in the cabbage family,

Heavy pans give you even heat, and more of it.

and baking soda are some of the other foods vulnerable to aluminum's graying effect. In the past, there was concern about aluminum and Alzheimer's, but evidence has been far from conclusive.

INTERVIEW YOURSELF TO HELP YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT PANS

There's nothing wrong with matching cookware in principle. Packaged starter sets are attractively priced, and a whole lineup of matching pans can be attractive, too. But a single material isn't suited for every kitchen task—with sets, you're often stuck with pans you don't need.



To help offset the weight of a heavy pan, choke up on the pan's handle and brace it along your forearm.

That enameled cast-iron casserole is just right for the cassoulet you'll move from stovetop to oven. But its matching saucepan overcooked your last caramel because the pan was too heavy to heft quickly once the sugar turned color.

You'll get more use out of pieces that you hand-pick yourself. You may already own a matched set (the red Le Creuset ensemble I got years ago as a housewarming present is still hanging in my kitchen), but as you add new pieces to your collection, you'll have a chance to branch out to different materials.

To decide what you need, ask yourself questions like the ones that follow.

♦ **Are you more likely to make saucy dishes like fricassées and sautés than delicate foods like omelets and crêpes?** A bigger sauté or frying pan with high sides and a lid may be a better choice than a shallower, slope-sided omelet pan without one. "At home, I make a lot of dishes where the pasta gets thrown in with the other ingredients for the last few minutes, and my anodized-aluminum sauté pan is the one I always grab," says Molly Stevens of her favorite Calphalon pan. "It's responsive, I know the food won't scorch, and I love the

Good pans are worth their price because they manage heat better

"Good conductor" and "heavy gauge" are the key features of good cookware. Here's how these characteristics affect cooking.

You get responsive heat. Good heat conductors, such as copper and aluminum, are responsive to temperature

changes. They'll do what the heat source tells them to do—heat up, cool down—almost instantly.

You get fast heat flow. Heat flows more easily through a good heat conductor, assuring a quick equalizing of temperature on the cooking surface.

You get even heat diffusion. A thicker pan has more distance between the cooking surface and the heat source. By the time the heat flows to the cooking surface, it will have spread out evenly, because heat diffuses as it flows.

You get more heat. Mass

holds heat (heat is vibrating mass, so the more mass there is to vibrate, the more heat there will be). The more pan there is to heat, the more heat the pan can hold, so there's more constant heat for better browning, faster reducing, and hotter frying.

handle." She adds that its anodized surface is easy to clean.

◆ **Do you cook lots of soup on weekends to freeze for meals during the week?** A heavy stockpot may be essential. "I always choose heavy-gauge for anything that stays on the stove a long time," says Larry Forgione, chef/owner of the New York City restaurant An American Place, who says food burns and sticks whenever he uses a thin stockpot. Abby Dodge, *Fine Cooking's* recipe tester,

agrees. "With soups and stocks, a heavy bottom comes first," she insists. "And if your budget allows it, go for the best."

◆ **Do you make pasta several times a week?** Don't toss that big, thinner-gauge pasta pot if you already have one; it's fine for boiling and steaming—and lighter is better when you're carting a boiling pot from stove to sink. But if you don't have a big pot yet, think about doubling up your pasta-boiling with stock- and soup-making by using a heavy stockpot.

◆ **Do you like making sauces?** "When I'm browning or deglazing, I need to see what the pan juices are doing," says Jim Peterson, *Fine Cooking* contributing editor and chef. For such jobs, he avoids pans with a darker interior, such as anodized aluminum, and prefers a shiny stainless-steel lining.

Nancy Silverton, baker, pastry chef, and co-owner of La Brea Bakery and Campanile in Los Angeles, agrees. "I love the steady heat and surface of seasoned

Materials that make the pot

Stainless steel is a poor conductor of heat all by itself, but it's a peerless surface metal: easy to clean, durable, shiny for good visibility, and completely nonreactive.

Copper is a superb heat conductor and radiates visual warmth, too, if you keep it polished. All alone, copper is highly reactive with food, so the pans must be lined. It's often used as a bottom layer for better heat conduction.

Aluminum is a top-notch heat conductor and is lightweight and easy to handle, but it reacts with acidic, sulfurous, and alkaline foods. Aluminum is often used as a core or bottom layer for better heat conduction.

Cast iron is an excellent retainer of heat and great for high temperatures. It's relatively slow to heat up and cool down, and needs thorough drying and oiling.

Nonstick coatings have greatly improved to withstand high heat and abrasion.

Anodized aluminum is aluminum that's been electrochemically sealed, making for a nonreactive, hard surface. The dark interior, though, makes it difficult to see color change in pan juices and translucent sauces.

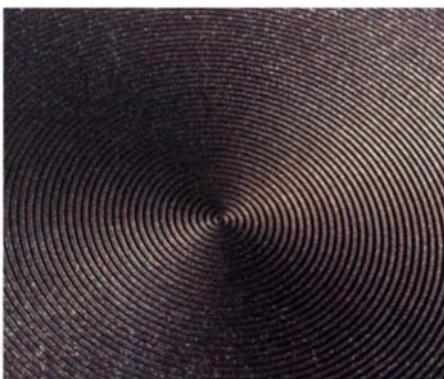
Enameling cast iron's coating solves the maintenance problems of cast iron, but the heating benefits remain. The enamel coating can chip with wear and abrasion.



cast iron, but seeing color change is crucial, so I need a pan that's bright inside, like stainless," she says. Silverton cautions that tin- and aluminum-lined pans affect the taste of acidic foods, such as her compotes and fruit fillings on pp. 46–50. Both Peterson and Silverton love the visual warmth of copper but agree that top-notch stainless with an aluminum core, like All-Clad, works just as well.

◆ **Do you often serve stews, pot roasts, or braised meat dishes?** Paul Bertolli loves the way Le Creuset enameled cast iron handles such dishes. "I can start dishes on the stove, transfer them to the oven, and all the juices will be ready to deglaze in the same pot." He adds that one-pot cooking makes for swift cleanup, too. And Scott Peacock, a southern chef, loves enameled cast iron because "you can put on a lid, set the pot at the back of the stove, and it will hold the food at a good serving temperature a long while."

◆ **Do you like cooking chops, steaks, or thick fish fillets?** Cast iron may be heavy,



Circulon pans have a ridged nonstick surface.

The food won't stick, but the juices will, so deglazing the pan is possible.

but chef and writer Regina Schrambling says that "for searing fish at intense heat and finishing it in the oven, I trust it." Scott Peacock likes it, too, especially for making golden-crusted cornbread, but cautions that unless cast iron is well seasoned, it can make acidic foods taste metallic, and that metal utensils themselves are apt to scrape off seasoning.

◆ Are you trying to cook with less fat?

Nonstick may be a good choice, and happily, nonstick technology has come a long way in the past few years. With the old-style, lighter-weight nonstick pans, it was hard to get the pan hot enough to sauté properly. Nonstick pans are now being made of harder, high-heat-tolerant metals, such as anodized aluminum and stainless steel, and the coatings themselves can withstand more heat and abrasion—no more nonstick flakes in your food. Another potential disadvantage of sautéing in nonstick is the difficulty in deglazing. The nonstick surface can be so effective that you never get any good brown bits in the bottom of the pan. With Circulon, which has a finely ridged nonstick interior, browning takes place more like in a conventional pan, and Circulon's Commercial line is super heavy duty.

Amy Albert is an assistant editor for Fine Cooking. ◆

Here are some details to make choosing equipment easier

Brand	Material	2-qt. saucepan	3-qt. sauté	Large stockpot	Telephone
All-Clad Ltd.	anodized aluminum/stainless lining	\$113	\$184	\$290 (12-qt.)	800/ALL CLAD
All-Clad Copper	copper/stainless/aluminum core	\$158	\$227	\$288 (8-qt.)	
All-Clad Stainless	stainless/aluminum core	\$100	\$146	\$264 (12-qt.)	
Calphalon	anodized aluminum	\$87 (2½-qt.)	\$125	\$150 (12-qt.)	800/809-PANS
Calphalon Pro Tri-Ply Stainless	stainless/aluminum core	\$90 (2½-qt.)	\$130	\$140 (6-qt.)	
Cuisinart	stainless/copper base	\$90 (2¾-qt.)	\$108 (3½-qt.)	\$154 (9-qt.)	800/726-0190
Farberware	stainless/aluminum base	\$30	\$40 (10" skillet)	\$70 (12-qt.)	617/568-8112
Le Creuset	enameled cast iron	\$115	N/A	\$290 (9½-qt. casserole)	803/589-6211
Lodge Cast Iron	cast iron	\$28	\$10 (10" skillet)	\$60 (10-qt.)	423/837-7181
Mauviel Cuprinox	professional-weight copper/stainless steel lining	\$150	\$180 (9½")	\$280 (14-qt. lighter-weight tin-lined)	800/243-0852 (Sur La Table)
Wearever Commercial	aluminum	n/a	\$24 (10")	\$27 (12-qt.)	800/527-7727

NONSTICK

Brand	Pan base	2-qt. saucepan	3-qt. sauté	Large stockpot	Telephone
All-Clad Stainless	stainless/aluminum core	n/a	\$157	n/a	800/ALL-CLAD
Anolon Professional	anodized aluminum	\$94	\$125	\$157 (8-qt.)	800/326-3933
Anolon	anodized aluminum	\$85	\$119	\$147 (8-qt.)	
Calphalon	anodized aluminum	\$97 (2½-qt.)	\$139	\$141 (8-qt.)	800/809-PANS
Circulon Commercial	anodized aluminum	\$125 (2½-qt.)	\$100 (10¼" skillet)	\$238 (12-qt.)	800/326-3933
Cuisinart	stainless/copper base	\$95 (2¾-qt.)	\$120 (3½-qt.)	\$165 (9-qt.)	800/726-0190
Farberware Millennium	stainless/aluminum base	\$68	\$80 (10½")	\$110 (12-qt.)	617/568-8112
Steelon Professional	stainless/aluminum base	\$88	\$122	\$143 (8-qt.)	800/326-3933

Bold or Mellow, Anchovies

Surprisingly subtle or lively and pungent, the taste of an anchovy depends on how you use it

BY PAUL BERTOLLI



Salt-packed anchovies (left) have the truest flavor of all cured anchovies. Jars of oil-packed anchovies allow you to choose the meatiest fillets. Use oil-packed anchovies from a can only when nothing else is available.

Anchovies were the first shocking food I ever put in my mouth. Growing up in an Italian-American household that never quite converted to Betty Crocker, anchovies were a pungent reminder of the roots of my mother's cooking. She often prepared the types of assertive, challenging foods my father was so fond of: bitter chicory salads, blue-veined cheeses, sharply vinegared peperoncini. From him, I learned to appreciate anchovies and their agreeable assault on the taste buds.

SUBTLE OR SHARP, ANCHOVIES ADAPT TO WHATEVER ROLE THEY'RE ASSIGNED

Eaten straight from the can, anchovies are briny and assertive, but when cooked and combined with other ingredients, anchovies fortify the taste of other foods without dominating them, leaving behind a delicious, though elusive, flavor. Used this way, anchovies play a role similar to that of aromatic vegetables in a soup or a bit of pancetta added to a sauce. Many people who think they don't like anchovies are often surprised to discover how much better many of their favorite recipes taste when a few anchovies are added to the mix.



A coarse paste with a robust taste. The popular Provençal condiment anchoiade is best when made with a mortar and pestle. Chop the garlic and anchovies and mash them with a spoon if you don't have a mortar, but don't use a food processor or blender. The texture simply won't be right.

Add Mediterranean Flavor

A MEDITERRANEAN CLASSIC

Along with olive oil and garlic, anchovies are one of the essential elements of Mediterranean cuisine. Anchovy fillets garnish the classic Provençal onion and olive tart called *pissaladière* (pronounced pee-sah-lah-DYAIR), and grilled steaks in the south of France are often accompanied by a generous dose of anchovy butter. Fennel and vegetables in the brassica group, such as broccoli, broccoli raab, and cauliflower, all share an affinity for the strong taste of anchovies.

Because of their heady aroma, anchovies are used sparingly in delicate cream-based sauces and mayonnaise. True fans employ them with intentional abandon in rustic preparations such as *anchioiade*: anchovies scented with garlic and herbs, moistened with olive oil, and worked in a mortar to a coarse paste.

When used to season a roast, anchovies dissolve, leaving little hint of their own bold taste but contributing considerable depth of flavor to the meat. Perhaps the most glorious presentation is *bagna cauda* (pronounced BAHN-yah KOW-dah), a warm bath of anchovies melted in olive oil (or, in an alternate Piedmontese version, cream) with thin slivers of garlic. It's served as a dip for a mountainous platter of fresh

vegetables—carrots, fennel, cardoons, hearts of lettuce and celery, endive, and artichokes.

ANCHOVIES COME PACKED IN OIL OR SALT

Despite the fact that they're delicious and plentiful, fresh anchovies have never been in demand in this country, except from those with a nostalgia for the flavors of Italy, Spain, Provence, or Turkey. As a result, anchovies are usually only available in preserved forms: whole fish salted and canned; fillets salted and packed in oil; or a paste usually sold in tubes.

A cured anchovy is both an aroma and a taste. The fragrance is often of something less elegant than tidepools followed by the penetrating flavor of salt. I suspect it's both of these characteristics that make anchovies controversial. While the fragrance of anchovies is indeed potent, it would be unfair to call it fishy, a term which more accurately describes fish on the other side of fresh. Nor is saltiness a natural attribute of anchovies, but rather the inevitable result of an aggressive cure. The best anchovies are meaty, with a rich, round flavor and a sharp scent.

Salt-packed anchovies are worth seeking. If you've only tasted oil-packed anchovies, which can



*Anchovies "melt" when cooked.
Don't bother to chop the fillets:
they'll dissolve as you stir them
in the hot oil.*



Boldly flavored with garlic and anchovies, warm bagna cauda provides a delicious contrast to an assortment of crisp, seasonal vegetables.



The sharp flavor of anchovies awakens appetites. Spread anchioiade on croutons for a fine start to a meal or serve it on top of a grilled steak.

be harsh and overly salty, salt-packed anchovies will be a revelation. Because they're exposed only to sea salt, their flavor is the truest of all cured anchovies. They're bigger and meatier than oil-packed anchovies, and they have a more mellow, fuller flavor. Look for them in 600-gram tins (about a pound) that originate from Sicily. A common imported brand is labeled *Agostino Recca—Aciughe Salate*. Once you open a can of salt-packed anchovies, you need to fillet them and pack them in oil, as shown below.

If you can't find salt-packed anchovies, look for glass jars of oil-packed and pick one with the meatiest fillets. Cans of oil-packed anchovies should be a distant third choice. Anchovy paste in a tube is made from the dregs at the anchovy packing plant. If it's all that's available, skip the anchovies altogether.

TEMPERING ANCHOVIES' PUNGENT BITE

Whichever type of anchovy you use, soaking the fillets in cold water makes them taste less salty. Let them soak for 20 minutes, changing the water twice. Taste the anchovies; if they're still too salty, continue to soak them until you're pleased with their flavor.

Any cured anchovy, oil or salt packed, will develop an unpleasant fishy aroma if left exposed to air. Once a container is opened, any unused anchovies should be stored in a tightly covered jar or crock with at least an inch of oil on top. If possible, store at about 55°F; if not, the refrigerator is fine.

Anchovies need gentle heat for a mellow flavor. When cooking with anchovies, be careful not to expose them to too high a heat. Anchovies added to a pan of sizzling oil will harden and quickly become

bitter and harsh. Instead, allow them to cook slowly over low heat so that they dissolve gradually and their flavor can meld with the other ingredients. If your anchovies are particularly strong, add a few drops of lemon juice to help tame their flavor.

Anchoiade

Spread *anchoiade* on croutons, serve it as a dip with crudité, or add some to a vinaigrette. Don't be concerned that the oil doesn't completely incorporate into the mixture. Simply stir it well before serving. *Yields about 1 cup.*

**5 oz. anchovy fillets (about 25)
4 cloves garlic, peeled
1/3 cup olive oil
2 tsp. chopped fresh savory or flat-leaf parsley
Freshly ground black pepper**

In a mortar, pound the anchovy fillets and garlic to a coarse mash. Stir in the olive oil and savory. Grind a little pepper over the mixture and stir it in well. Let stand about 10 min. to let the flavors develop before serving. Covered with an inch of olive oil, *anchoiade* will keep for a week.

Bagna Cauda

Serve this "hot bath" of anchovies and garlic with a colorful platter of raw fresh vegetables: endive, carrots, small tomatoes, sliced fennel bulb, broccoli or cauliflower florets, artichoke hearts, radishes—whatever is in season. This recipe can easily be halved. *Yields about 2 1/2 cups.*

**1 small head fresh garlic (about 2 oz.)
600g can salt-packed anchovies, filleted
1 1/2 cups extra-virgin olive oil**

Peel the garlic, cut the cloves in half lengthwise, and slice each one as thin as possible.

In a heavy-based saucepan or a water bath (*bain marie*), combine the anchovies, garlic slices, and olive oil. Over

How to fillet and store salt-packed anchovies

Open a can of salt-packed anchovies and you'll find whole fish, not just the skinny fillets you get in a jar of oil-packed ones. Salt-packed anchovies must be rinsed and filleted before they can be used, but the big, meaty fillets and their superior flavor make them well worth the effort.

As soon as you open the can, remove all the anchovies and rinse them with cold water to dislodge the salt. Rinsing also softens the fish, making them easier to fillet. Then, working under a slow running faucet over a sieve or colander, fillet and repack the anchovies as shown here.



Turn the rinsed anchovy belly side up and run your finger from the head end down through the tail; this removes the viscera, separates the fillets, and exposes the backbone. Lift the backbone and lateral pin bones away from the fillet.



Soak the fillets in cold water for about 20 minutes, and then lay them on an absorbent towel to dry.



Cover the fillets with an inch of olive oil and store in a cool, dry place.

a low flame, cook until the anchovies have "melted," 12 to 15 min. in the pan, a bit longer in the water bath. Stir often with a wooden spoon. The anchovies should fall apart and form a thick sediment in the pan; the garlic will also soften both in texture and in pungency. *Bagna cauda* will keep for a week.

Leg of Lamb Stuffed with Anchovies & Tarragon

New potatoes tossed in sweet butter and some of the pan juices make a fine accompaniment to this roasted lamb. Serves six to eight.

6½ lb. butterflied leg of lamb
Salt and coarsely ground black pepper
4 oz. anchovy fillets (about 20)
½ lb. fresh spinach leaves
2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh tarragon or 1 Tbs. dried
4 cloves garlic, cut into about 50 thin slivers

Heat the oven to 375°F. Open the lamb leg and cut away any visible pockets of fat. Sprinkle the boned surface with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Cut 1 oz. of the anchovies into about 50 pieces. Coarsely chop the remaining 3 oz.

Drop the spinach into a large pot of boiling water, stir, and let cook for 1 min. Drain in a colander and immediately refresh the spinach under cold running water. Squeeze out the water and chop the spinach fine.

Combine the chopped anchovies with the tarragon and spinach. Spread the mixture over the boned surface of the lamb. Shape the meat into a neat cylinder and tie it closely and snugly with kitchen twine.

Poke the point of a sharp paring knife into the exterior of the lamb; gently push the knife away from you to make a gaping hole; push a garlic sliver and an anchovy sliver into the hole. Repeat this process 1 inch away from the first hole; continue until the entire surface of the lamb is studded. Season the lamb with salt and pepper.

Put the leg on a rack in a roasting pan and roast until the internal temperature of the meat registers 125°F on a meat thermometer, about 1 hour, 15 min. Allow the lamb to rest in a warm place about 20 min. before slicing.

SOURCES FOR SALT-PACKED ANCHOVIES

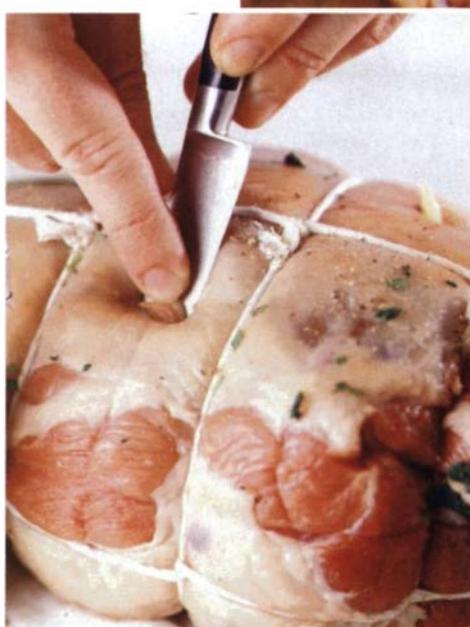
Look for tins of salt-packed anchovies in Italian markets and other stores that specialize in Mediterranean foods, or order them from the stores listed here.

Made to Order, 1576 Hopkins St., Berkeley, CA 94707; 510/524-7552.

Vivande Porta Via, 2125 Fillmore St., San Francisco, CA 94115; 415/346-4430.

Zingerman's, 422 Detroit St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106; 313/769-1625.

Paul Bertolli, a contributing editor for Fine Cooking, never says "hold the anchovies." ♦



Slip bits of anchovies and slivers of garlic into the lamb. The anchovies will dissolve and enrich the flavor of the meat without adding any distinct taste of their own.



Anchovies are a luscious accent to the rich flavor of roast lamb. This recipe is a perfect one to convert those who think they don't like anchovies.

Wine Choices

Soft reds temper salty anchovies; full reds match their assertiveness

When choosing red wines for these anchovy dishes, be sure they're full but not hugely tannic because salt magnifies tannins. And too much tannin feels rough, gritty, and masks a wine's fruit.

In the lamb recipe, garlic, spinach, anchovies, and tarragon merge in a bold synergy of flavor. I'd choose a medium-weight Italian red with soft texture and complex aromatics. Try Santa Cristina, a Tuscan Sangiovese from Antinori, or Mascarelli Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Another Tuscan, a smooth, slightly herbal Sangiovese/Cabernet blend from Col-Di-Sasso, would bring out the appealing green flavors of the spinach and tarragon.

Any of these wines would be fine with the *anchoiade*.

Wines with complexity and depth from the southern Rhône (I like Perrin Reserve) or from Provence (Bandol from Domaine Tempier is delicious) would also work well with the lamb.

Bagna cauda wants a lusty red. Full-bodied wines like Barolo, Nebbiolo, and Amarone are more tannic for sure, but the traditional accompaniments of bread, cheese, and vegetables will help temper the tannins. In addition, tannic wines like these soften as they age.

Rosina Tinari Wilson, a food and wine writer and teacher, is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.



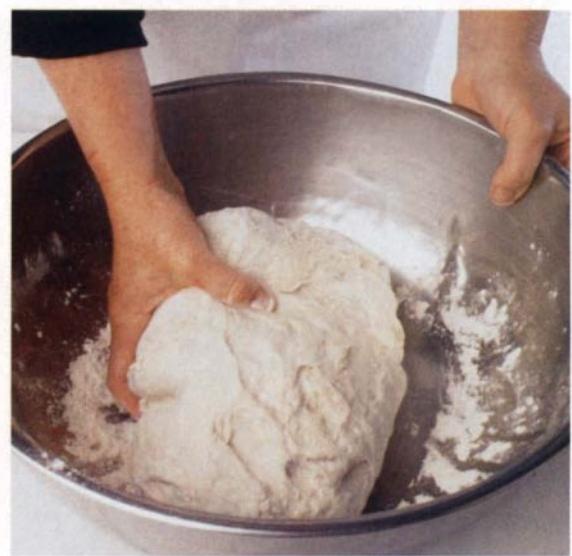
Proof the yeast and make a lumpy dough



To proof the yeast, dissolve it in the warm water with the sugar and flour; whisk lightly. Let the mixture sit until foamy, 5 to 10 minutes.



To make the dough, add the milk powder, cold water, flour, and salt and knead lightly.



The dough should be ugly and lumpy, which shows that it hasn't been overworked. Cover the bowl and refrigerate until the dough has doubled, 1 to 2 hours.

Flaky, Buttery Sticky Buns

Chilled croissant dough makes these pastries better than any cinnamon roll you've ever tasted

BY KATHLEEN STEWART

When I lived in Berkeley, California, in the late '70s, one of my favorite morning stops was a wonderful bakery called La Farine. People would line up early to buy warm, yeasty pastries, affectionately known as "morning buns," which they usually devoured on the spot. Years later, as I was preparing to open my

own bakery, I asked Lili LeCocq, the engaging owner of La Farine, how she made these memorable treats. She replied simply, "Croissant dough. It's just croissant dough."

So I set myself to the task of learning to make croissant dough. The process seemed very complicated at first, but as I

Shape the softened butter into a pliable slab



Sandwich the butter between two pieces of floured waxed paper and shape it into a 10x12-inch rectangle. Wrap the butter in plastic and chill it in the refrigerator.



Add the flour to the slightly softened butter.



Knead the flour into the butter until it's well incorporated and the mixture is smooth.

Fold the chilled dough and butter into a neat package



Roll the chilled dough into an 18x12-inch rectangle on a floured surface. Unwrap the chilled butter and lay it on the upper two-thirds of the rolled dough.



Fold the lower (unbuttered) third over the center third.



Bring the upper third down over the center, as if you were folding a letter.



Tug on the corners to make an even rectangle.

became familiar with the technique, my apprehension turned to delight. I soon discovered how to make my own sticky buns that are deliciously different from the uninspired cake-like cinnamon rolls that seem to be everywhere. Now these tender, buttery morning pastries are one of Downtown Bakery's most popular items. The preparation is foolproof if you're willing to take your time and follow all the steps with care.

CROISSANT DOUGH IS YEASTED PUFF PASTRY

If you've ever made puff pastry, you'll be familiar with the technique for making croissant dough. Both are delicate doughs with many layers that are made with a series of "turns"—a process of rolling, folding, and resting—that distributes the butter into countless ultra-thin layers. Croissant dough, however, contains yeast, making it more elastic and bread-like than regular puff pastry and not quite as flaky. But the most notable difference is the distinctive yeasty flavor in the finished pastries.

To make croissant dough, you do need a block of time, but the time spent actually working the dough is minimal. Most of the time, the dough is resting. I often spread the process out over two days by making the dough the first day and letting it rise in the refrigerator overnight. The next day, I shape and bake the buns so they're ready at the time when they're most appreciated: in the morning.

BEGIN WITH TWO COMPONENTS: DOUGH AND BUTTER

The only tools you need to make this dough are a bowl, a mixing spoon, and a rolling pin. Begin by dissolving dry yeast with a little warm water, sugar, and flour, a technique known as proofing the yeast. This gives the yeast a chance to come to life and lets you see right off that it's active. Then combine nonfat milk powder, water, flour, and salt just to form a rough-looking, undermixed dough. Kneading and excessive handling will develop the gluten and make your sticky buns tough.

Roll, fold, and turn to multiply the buttery layers



Position the dough so that the short open ends are at 6 and 12 o'clock. With even pressure on the rolling pin, roll the dough until it doubles in length. Roll toward the open ends, not toward the folds.



Fold the dough in thirds as you'd fold a letter.



Rotate 90 degrees again and roll it out so that it doubles in length. Refold.



After this set of two turns, seal the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours. Repeat another set of two turns, followed by a rest in the refrigerator of 2 to 4 hours, then a third set of two turns, followed by a final refrigerated rest of at least 1 hour, but preferably overnight.

For tender, flaky, more flavorful pastry, keep the dough cold. Most recipes for yeast doughs recommend finding a warm place for the dough to rise, but croissant dough needs to be kept cold. Refrigerating this dough to rise for an hour or two helps ensure that the finished pastry will be tender and have a more pronounced yeasty flavor as well.

All butter contains some water, but excess moisture interferes with the way croissant dough rises. Good-quality unsalted butter has the least amount of moisture and gives you the best buttery flavor.

Kneading a bit of flour into the butter will help absorb the excess moisture. Unfortunately, the process of adding flour to the butter softens the butter too much to use right away. Once the flour is fully incorporated, shape the butter into a

slab sandwiched between two sheets of waxed paper or plastic wrap, and chill it.

Ideally, both the dough and the butter should be between 55° and 60°F. At this temperature, the butter slab will be slightly pliable, like modeling clay, but not at all mushy. If the butter is too warm, it will be absorbed into the dough rather than remain layered between it. Butter that's too cold will break through the dough and make lumpy-looking pastry that bakes unevenly.

When the dough and butter are evenly chilled, roll the dough into a rectangle and wrap the butter in the dough, adjusting the folds and edges to make an evenly rectangular package. Then turn the package 90 degrees, roll it out again, and refold it. Each time the dough is turned and folded, the number of layers multiplies in rapid progression. After every two turns,

THE "WET TOWEL TOSS" RELAXES THE DOUGH



If the dough seems resistant to rolling, let it rest for a moment. Then gently hold the ends of the dough and flap it against the table as if you were shaking out a wet towel. This helps relax the dough so that you don't overwork it.

Roll the dough around a cinnamon filling to make sticky buns



Make the filling by mixing the sugars, cinnamon, and cloves.



The risen dough will look like a puffy pillow after a night in the refrigerator.



Put the finished dough on a floured surface. Roll it out into a rectangle $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick.



Sprinkle the cinnamon-sugar mixture evenly over the rolled dough.



Roll the filled dough into a tight coil, starting from a long side of the rectangle.

the dough needs to be wrapped in plastic and allowed to rest in the refrigerator for several hours. This cold rest keeps the butter from melting and oozing into the dough. It also ensures that the gluten in the dough won't be overdeveloped and that the finished pastries will be tender, not tough.

If, after resting, the dough resists rolling and shrinks rather than expands, let it sit at room temperature for a few minutes and then shake it out like a wet towel. I've found that this little shake relaxes the dough and lets me continue without much trouble.

A well-made croissant dough needs six complete turns which, including resting periods, can take as long as eight hours. After the final turn, wrap the dough loosely in plastic and let it rest in the refrigerator for at least another hour, but preferably overnight, before shaping. This is also the time to freeze the dough for future use. Defrost frozen croissant dough in the refrigerator for a day and then proceed to shape the pastries.

SHAPING AND BAKING THE BUNS

If you've chilled your dough overnight, when you open the refrigerator the next day you'll see what looks like a puffy pillow. If it has rested only a short time, the dough will look just slightly larger than when the turns were completed. The difference relates to the time the yeast had to activate. A longer rest gives the buns a more pronounced yeasty flavor.

To make the classic swirl design of these sticky buns, roll out the finished



Cut the coil into $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces.

Use a muffin tin for a snug, round shape



Gently tug on the end of the coil and wrap it over one side of the swirl.



Tuck the pieces, wrapped end first, into a greased muffin pan. Pat the tops to be sure the dough touches the bottom of the pan.



Cover and set in a warm place to rise for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Give them a poke to test if they've risen enough. When the indentation stays put, they're ready for baking.

dough, dust it with a mixture of brown sugar and spices, roll it into a tight coil, and cut it into individual rounds. Give the buns a snug, round shape by tucking them neatly into greased muffin tins. As you put the buns into the muffin tins, press gently on the tops to be sure the dough comes firmly in contact with the bottom of the pan. Once in the oven, any space between the dough and the pan will turn into a pocket of scorching-hot air, which will quickly turn your sticky buns to cinders. If the dough becomes warm anytime as you roll or shape it, put it back in the refrigerator briefly to firm up.

The pastry needs to rise one last time—a step known as proofing the dough. Let the shaped buns rise in a warm spot: a protected corner of the kitchen or an oven that's not turned on. After 45 minutes, test the proof by lightly poking the side of the pastry with your finger. If the indentation stays put, the sticky buns are ready to bake.

As the buns bake, the sugars will melt into a marvelously gooey, spicy, not-too-sweet glaze. These buns are best eaten the same day they're made, which is rarely a problem. It's unlikely that you'll have leftovers, but if you do, they can be frozen, thawed, and warmed before serving.

Downtown Bakery's Sticky Buns

Yields 2 dozen sticky buns.

TO PROOF THE YEAST:

½ oz. (1 Tbs. plus ¾ tsp.) active dry yeast
¾ cup warm water
4 Tbs. sugar
1 oz. (3 Tbs.) unbleached flour



Bake at 400°F for 35 to 40 minutes. Put a piece of foil on the shelf beneath to catch any drips. If the tops start to burn during baking, cover them with foil. Turn out the pastries onto a baking sheet to cool.

FOR THE DOUGH:

2 oz. (½ cup plus 4½ tsp.) dry nonfat milk powder
2⅔ cups cold water
2½ lb. (8 cups) unbleached flour
5 tsp. salt

FOR THE BUTTER BLOCK:

1½ lb. (48 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into 2-inch cubes, slightly softened
2 Tbs. unbleached flour (approximately)

FOR THE FILLING:

2 cups packed brown sugar
2 cups sugar
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
Scant ¼ tsp. ground cloves

For the procedure, follow the photos starting on p. 70.

Kathleen Stewart runs the Downtown Bakery in Healdsburg, California, where the sticky buns continue to draw crowds. ♦



Sticky buns are best eaten the day they're made.

Starting dough in a well for ease and tenderness

A lot of recipes start with the direction *make a well of flour*. This may sound cryptic, but a well, sometimes called a fountain, is just a classic method for incorporating ingredients



Make a ring of flour by pouring it into a pile and clearing the center.



Mix the liquids and butter, if using, with your fingertips within the center of the well. Gradually work in the flour.



Sprinkle a few drops of ice water onto the dough if it feels too dry.

into flour quickly and delicately without excessive kneading or stirring, which can make doughs tough. A well is basically a pile of flour with a clear space in the center for the liquids and other ingredients—almost like a bowl made of flour.

Work directly on the countertop. Traditionally, a well is made right on a work surface. Some chefs prefer to start in a bowl and then finish the dough on the counter. I like to work on the countertop so I can easily access a small pile of flour I keep to the side to use if the pastry is too wet. Working on the countertop also means one less dish to wash later.

Here are the steps for making dough in a well.

◆ **Make the walls of the flour ring high enough** to contain the liquid ingredients, and then pour the liquids (including any butter) into the well.

◆ **Stir the ingredients in the center** with the fingertips of one hand. (Keep a hand clean for other tasks.) Using just your fingertips prevents overmixing and keeps the heat of your hands from warming the dough too much.

◆ **Mix in a circular motion with your fingertips**, tapping in flour from the top of the well or scooping a little flour from the inside of the walls as you go. If there's butter in the recipe, work it into the flour with the same circular motion. Rub the pieces of butter between floury fingertips to break them into pea-sized pieces.

◆ **Be careful not to make a chink in the flour wall** or the liquids will spill out. If this happens, repair the wall with a big pinch of flour and keep going.

Cold water holds things together, so if the dough seems too dry, use your clean hand to sprinkle on a few drops of ice-cold water. When all the flour has been incorporated, finish the dough according to your recipe.

Quick-chilling in an ice bath

I love to spend Sunday afternoons making a big pot of stew to have on hand for quick weeknight suppers. The only problem is cooling down the large pot of food before putting it away.

The temperature “danger zone” for all food is 40° to 140°F, but food spoils most rapidly between 70° and 120°F—which is where food sits when left at room temperature. The faster you can cool cooked food to below 70°, the better off you are.

Small containers of hot food will cool quickly in the refrigerator, but anything more than a few cups won’t—especially if it’s thick. For example, the center of a large pot of hot stew left in the refrigerator overnight will still be 70°F the next morning. In addition, hot food throws off enough heat to warm up the entire refrigerator.

The solution is to make an ice-water bath. Here’s how.

◆ **Fill your sink** or any other large basin (like a roasting pan) with cold water and ice.

◆ **Divide large batches** of food into small, unbreakable containers, which will cool faster. Stainless steel is best. Don’t use plastic—it insulates and holds the heat.

◆ **Set the container in the water bath** and stir the food often to speed cooling.

◆ **Don’t cover the food** until it has cooled completely. Food will cool faster without a lid.

◆ **Refrigerate the food** when it reaches 70°F. Refrigerators are designed to handle food at this temperature.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking. ♦



A roasting pan makes a quick ice bath and leaves the sink free. Stirring cools food more quickly.

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2. Add stuffing. Mix lightly. Serves 5.



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Avoid Three Common Cooking Problems by Controlling Enzymes

It may be true that what you can't see can't hurt you, but sometimes in cooking, what you can't see *can* affect the way your food turns out. A case in point is enzymes.

Enzymes are proteins in all plant and animal tissue that speed up chemical reactions. Much of enzymes' work is beneficial to food: they help ripen fruit and tenderize meat, and they're vital to the making of bread, beer, wine, and cheese.

But enzymes can also cause unwanted effects in cooking. They cause fruits and vegetables to turn brown and spoil, and they turn firm gelatin- or custard-based desserts into soupy messes.

Here are some good ways to control three enzymatic actions that often cause problems for cooks.

Problem: Fruits and vegetables turn brown when cut surfaces are exposed to air.

Why this happens: When a fruit or vegetable is bruised or cut, certain compounds within the fruit react with oxygen to form dark-colored compounds. These reactions are speeded along by enzymes that were locked away in separate cells before the fruit or vegetable was cut.

Solution: Slow this browning in the following ways:

- ◆ **Use acidic ingredients.** Any acid will slow browning, but ascorbic acid (vitamin C) is the most effective. Simply crush a vitamin C tablet, dissolve it in a bowl of water, and submerge the cut fruit in it. Or, put the sliced fruit in cold orange juice, which is high in vitamin C, until ready to use.

Another technique is to rub any cut surfaces with lemon.

- ◆ **Keep oxygen out.** Covering fruits or vegetables with water or a syrup helps keep oxygen away from the cut surface. To prevent discoloration, put potatoes in water, and brush fruit tarts with a glaze made from thin fruit jelly.



Pineapples will liquefy gelatin. To inactivate the enzyme that causes this reaction, cook the fruit.

Problem: Fruit desserts made with gelatin won't set.

Why this happens: Protein-destroying enzymes in these fruits—pineapple, kiwi, fig, papaya, and honeydew melon—and in fresh ginger can liquefy gelatin.

Solution: Inactivate the enzymes with heat.

Like most chemical reactions, enzymatic reactions are sensitive to temperature. Cold temperatures slow some en-

zymes, but only high temperatures will inactivate them. At 170°F, most enzymes, like other proteins, are denatured (see Food Science, *Fine Cooking* #2), making them unable to cause further reactions.

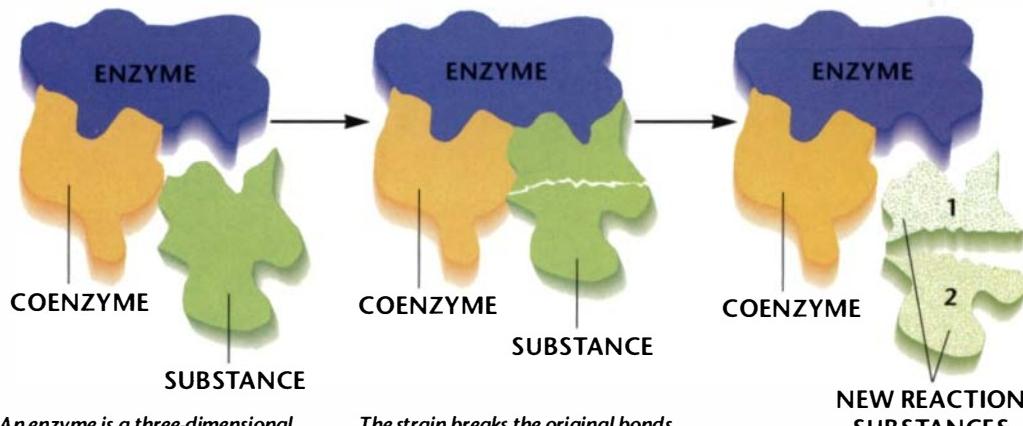
To make a gelatin-based dessert with fruits like pineapple, blanch the fruit to inactivate the enzymes before adding it to the gelatin. Or use canned fruit, which is heat-processed and so a safe bet.

Problem: A thick cream pie turns watery overnight.

Why this happens: An enzyme in raw egg yolks attacks starch, turning a thick custard made with cornstarch or flour (such as pastry cream and pie filling) into a thin soup.

Solution: Bring the custard to a gentle boil after the yolks are added. The heat will inactivate the enzyme.

Enzymes cause chemical reactions in food



An enzyme is a three-dimensional structure that fits like a puzzle piece, either alone or with a helper (a co-enzyme), onto a compound in such a way that it strains the chemical bonds within that substance.

The strain breaks the original bonds and reactions can occur to create new compounds.

Throughout the reaction, the enzyme remains unchanged and moves on to catalyze another reaction. One enzyme can catalyze many thousands of reactions in a second.

Shirley O. Corriher, a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, teaches food science and cooking classes across the country. ♦

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The Fragrant Allure of Cinnamon

Once when I was making an apple pie with my grandmother, I was so taken with the cinnamon's sweet fragrance that I sneaked a pinch. I was shocked because the flavor didn't match that delicious smell. But I didn't let

this early disappointment diminish my love of this aromatic spice. I figured out the right way to savor cinnamon, and I'm still charmed by the magic it works.

Cinnamon's aroma and flavor give more pleasure and comfort than just about any other spice, which is probably why it's so popular here in the United States. Cinnamon is second only to black pepper in use—which is especially striking when you consider that its scope is much more limited than pepper's. Just a sprinkle adds fragrant flavor to a wide array of dishes, from baked goods to barbecue sauces.

DIFFERENT TYPES OFFER DIFFERENT FLAVORS

There are two types of cinnamon, cassia and Ceylon. Both are the bark of Asian evergreen trees. Though the two trees look different and are

Cassia cinnamon sticks are the ones you'll find on the grocery store shelf. Though Ceylon cinnamon was once preferred, cassia is no longer considered inferior.

Chinese cassia chunks get ground into powder that has an especially sweet fragrance. Its potent flavor means you'll use less of it.



Ceylon cinnamon's bark is thinner and more delicate than that of cassia. Its complex flavor has citrusy overtones.

native to different parts of Asia, I think it's possible that they may have originated from similar plants.

You'll find cassia and Ceylon cinnamon in stick and powdered form. Cassia bark is sold in small chunks, too.

Cassia cinnamon (*Cinnamomum cassia*) is the cinna-

mon you see on every grocer's shelf in the U.S. Also known as Korintje cinnamon, good cassia has a rich brown color, a fragrant aroma, and a fine grind. Indonesia is the main supplier.

Cassia powder and chunks come from the lower bark of the tree, which has a higher

Experiment with cinnamon

Cinnamon is delicious in sweet concoctions, and it's surprisingly good in savory dishes, too.

- ◆ Mix up a jar of cinnamon sugar: it's a great way to introduce small children to cooking with spices. Use it in baked goods, or sprinkle it on toast, fresh fruit, and oatmeal.
- ◆ Flavor a fruit sauce, compote, or poaching syrup by infusing it with a cinnamon stick.
- ◆ Use sticks as stirrers for hot cider or mulled wine.
- ◆ Throw cassia chunks or ground cinnamon into the drip basket to flavor coffee.
- ◆ Add a dose to barbecue sauce, chili, or other hearty, spicy dishes.
- ◆ Make a Caribbean-inspired spice rub for grilled meat or poultry using cinnamon, thyme, cayenne, nutmeg, and ginger.



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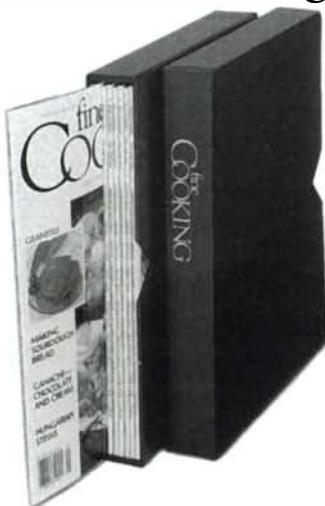
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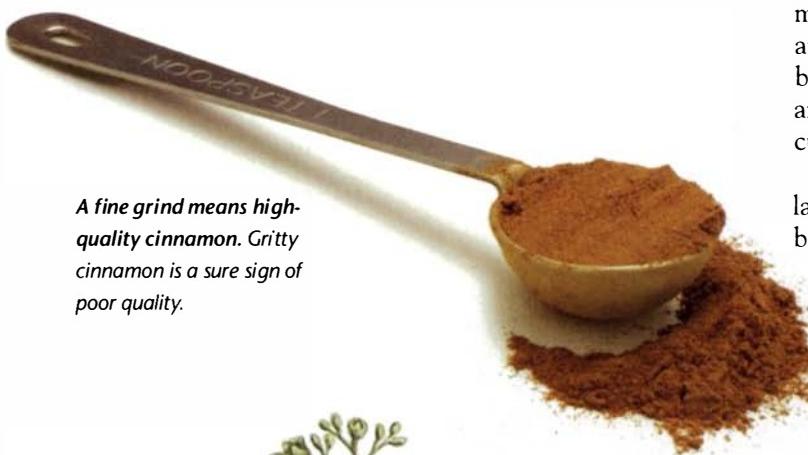
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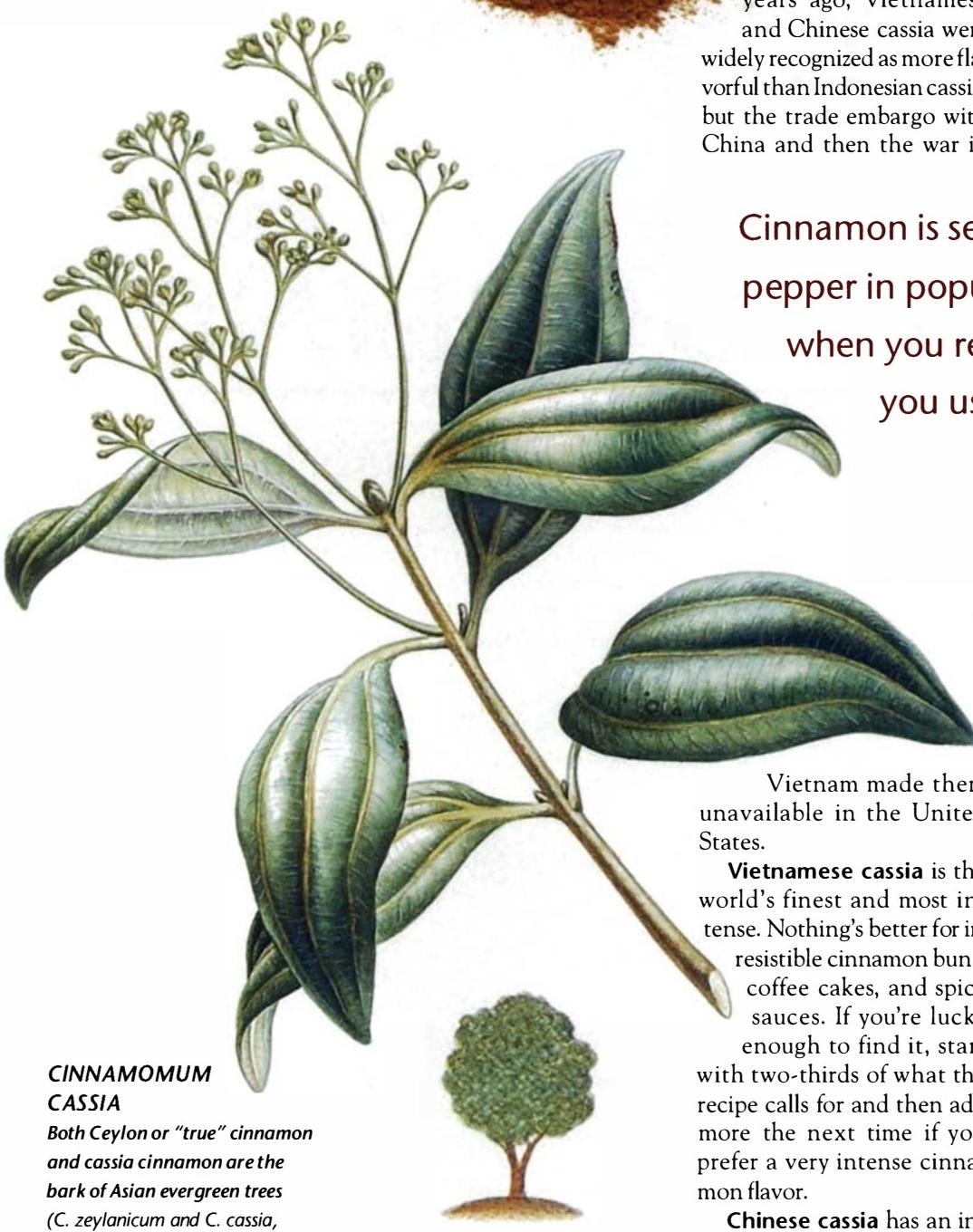


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FLAVORINGS



A fine grind means high-quality cinnamon. Gritty cinnamon is a sure sign of poor quality.



CINNAMOMUM CASSIA

Both Ceylon or "true" cinnamon and cassia cinnamon are the bark of Asian evergreen trees (*C. zeylanicum* and *C. cassia*, respectively).

essential oil content and thus more flavor. Cinnamon sticks are the bark from the upper branches. Younger, thinner, and less potent, the top bark curls more easily into sticks.

Gaining strongly in popularity with serious cooks and bakers is the darker, spicier, sweeter-smelling cassia cinnamon from Vietnam and China, though it's still difficult to find here. Fifty years ago, Vietnamese and Chinese cassia were widely recognized as more flavorful than Indonesian cassia, but the trade embargo with China and then the war in

reminds me of red-hots, those candies from childhood. Almost as potent as Vietnamese cassia, it's easier to find and less expensive. Use a little less than regular cassia.

Ceylon cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) is known as "true" cinnamon because, botanically, it's the original cinnamon tree. Ceylon cinnamon has a complex flavor and pleasant, citrusy overtones. It's milder and less sweet than cassia, with a thinner, more delicate bark. In England and Mexico, Ceylon cinnamon is preferred and used almost exclusively; you'll

Cinnamon is second only to black pepper in popularity—impressive when you realize how often you use pepper.

find it in English fruitcakes and in Mexican pastries and meat dishes.

Ceylon cinnamon was once considered more refined than cassia and preferable to it; it's still much rarer. But a century and a half of cultivation have improved cassia's flavor, and it's no longer seen as inferior.

Vietnam made them unavailable in the United States.

Vietnamese cassia is the world's finest and most intense. Nothing's better for irresistible cinnamon buns, coffee cakes, and spicy sauces. If you're lucky enough to find it, start with two-thirds of what the recipe calls for and then add more the next time if you prefer a very intense cinnamon flavor.

Chinese cassia has an incomparably sweet flavor that

LOOK FOR A FINE GRIND

Avoid ground cinnamon that looks gritty; it's a sure sign of poor quality. Unlike many spices, cinnamon is not suited to grinding at home. Stored in airtight glass jars in a cool, dry place, ground cinnamon will stay at its peak of flavor for one to two years. Sticks and chunks will keep indefinitely.

Pamela Penzey blends and sells spices for Penzeys, Ltd., in Waukesha, Wisconsin. ♦

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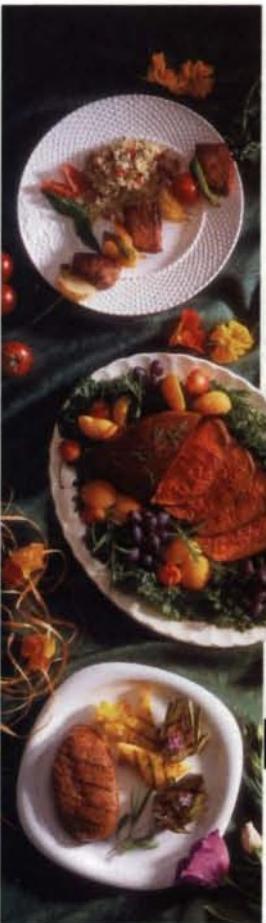
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Four Cookbooks for Today's Vegetable Renaissance

Like every dutiful mother, mine urged me to eat my vegetables, and like most children, I resisted. To my mother's amazement, I not only grew up, but I'm now passionate about peas, carrots, cauliflower, and the lot. Though I'm not a strict vegetarian, I do plan my meals around vegetables.

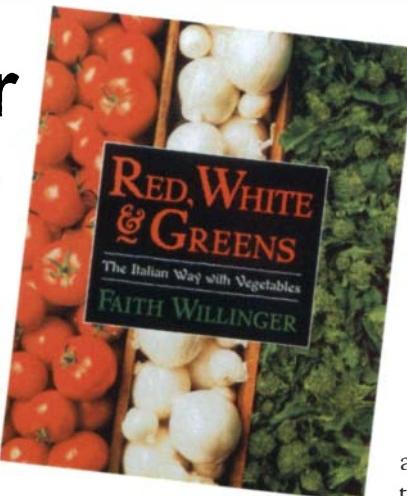
There are many signs that I'm not alone in my enthusiasm for vegetables: farmers' markets are popping up in many cities; produce once considered exotic, such as mustard greens and shiitake mushrooms, are appearing in mainstream grocery stores; and many new cookbooks that feature vegetables are being published.

Of the four cookbooks reviewed here, two are vegetarian, while the

recipes in the other two occasionally call for a little chicken stock or some pancetta. All four books have taught me new ways to prepare vegetables and have acquainted me with some lesser-known produce.

The current vegetable renaissance is due in large part to Alice Waters. When she opened her restaurant, Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, California, 25 years ago, Waters championed the use of such now-popular ingredients as arugula, fennel, and dandelion. At the time, most of us considered them little more than weeds.

In Waters' latest book, *Chez Panisse Vegetables*, she describes her philosophy of



Many of these Italian home-style dishes seem nearly effortless, calling for easily available ingredients.

cooking as "finding the best food and doing things the simplest way." Many of the resulting recipes are indeed simple, but they're also delicious: good and garlicky wilted mustard greens; chanterelles coated in a silky cream reduction; a warm potato salad made with *crème fraîche*.

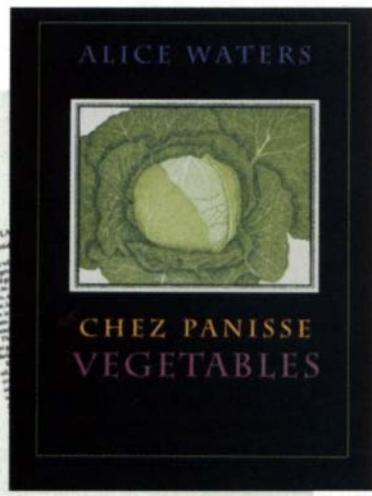
Throughout the book, Waters encourages the reader

availability. Waters also offers buying, handling, cooking, and gardening advice—some of it quite arcane but nonetheless fascinating. The chapter on fava beans, for example, includes a warning about a rare but potentially fatal reaction to a substance found in these beans.

There are a few things about Waters' book, however, that bother me. Though I thank her for introducing the rest of us to arugula, I don't see why she insists on calling it rocket, especially when she admits that it's no longer commonly known by this Old English appellation. It's irritating, too, that her book includes recipes for several pizzas but none for pizza dough. Instead, the book prompts readers to see Waters' earlier *Chez Panisse Pasta, Pizza & Calzone*.

In *Red, White & Greens: The Italian Way with Vegetables*, Faith Willinger has

**All these books taught me new ways
to fix familiar vegetables and also
acquainted me with lesser-known
produce like chicory.**



Alice Waters encourages cooks to experiment by offering informal narrative instruction as well as traditionally formatted recipes.

to experiment. To that end, about a third of the recipes are informal narratives explaining what's involved in making dishes such as marinated roasted peppers, potato gratin, and caramelized turnips. The rest of the recipes are given in traditional format.

Each vegetable is awarded its own chapter, which begins with an elegant color linocut and information on the vegetable's origins, flavor, and

collected recipes for the kind of vegetable dishes that Italians indulge in at home—food that's considered too *casalinga* (the word means homemade but implies both hominess and homeliness) to serve in fancy restaurants.

Willinger, an American who has lived in Italy for more than 20 years, culled her recipes from home cooks as well as from the vegetable sellers at Florence's Santo Spirito market. Asparagus

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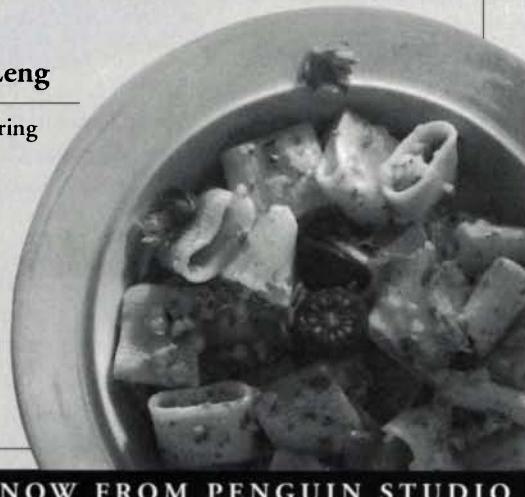
by Christian Teubner,
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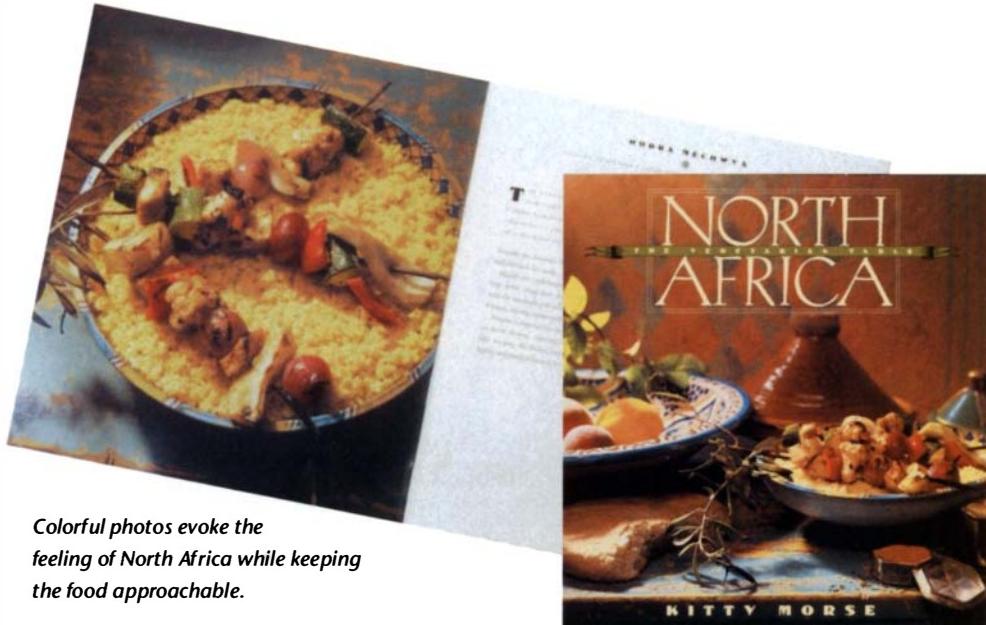
dipped in a mash of hard-cooked egg, olive oil, and vinegar, preferably eaten by hand, is one example. Nudies, or *gnudi*, as they're known in Florentine dialect, is another—spinach ravioli filling without the pasta (hence, “nudie”) that's shaped into little balls, poached, and then baked with some melted butter or tomato sauce.

Willinger's food and tone are casual, but the text and recipes are sharp, informative, and clear. A chapter called “The Italian Pantry” contains an excellent section on olive oil that explains why it's so important to Italian cooking, how to store it, and even suggests a few brand names.

Like Waters, Willinger arranges her chapters by vegetable, but she considers the vegetables from an Italian perspective, talking about their cultural, historical, even medical significance in Italy.

In *The Vegetarian Table: North Africa*, Kitty Morse covers the cuisine of the Maghreb (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria). While the quality of *The Vegetarian Table* series of books (in which other authors previously covered Italy, France, and Mexico) has been scatter-shot, Morse presents the cooking of this colorful region with style. Though her selection is far from comprehensive, Morse, a native Moroccan, gives us a handy introduction to North Africa's vegetable dishes.

The chapter on the vegetable salads that usually begin a North African meal is a great source for buffets. A classic Tunisian carrot salad made with caraway seed and *harissa* hot sauce is typical of the simple yet satisfying offerings. Fennel & Grapefruit Salad tingles with the addi-

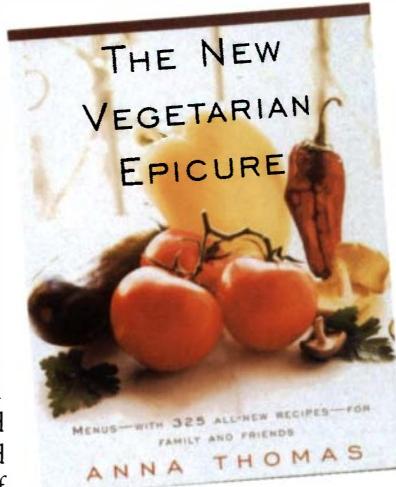


Colorful photos evoke the feeling of North Africa while keeping the food approachable.

tion of scallions and cumin, while capers and mint perk up a dish of mashed zucchini.

The chapter called “Sweet & Savory Stews” is packed with the tasty *tagines* (stews) of Morocco and Algeria, such as Yams & Carrots in Honey Sauce, a dish that's sweet without being cloying. Morse offers a number of couscous recipes, and although the chapter on desserts and drinks is brief, a milky Custard with Orange Flower Water seems the perfect ending to a spicy meal.

Anna Thomas penned *The Vegetarian Epicure* and its



Breezy essays add whimsy to this nonjudgmental vegetarian cookbook.

followup, *The Vegetarian Epicure, Book Two*, back in the '70s and accurately chronicled the emerging American vegetarian scene, with flowing hippie-style line drawings and plenty of cheese. Her latest effort, *The New Vegetarian Epicure*, reflects the way many of us eat today (less fat, more influence from the Mediterranean) but still features Thomas' friendly voice.

Recipes are grouped under menus ranging from a “Nothing Fancy Brunch” to “A Gala Dinner for Late Spring” and are further classified in categories like salads, soups, and so on. Essays on topics such as wood mushrooms, tea parties, and the finicky tastes of children are breezy and funny.

The food is equally good-natured, often whimsical, and adaptable. For a picnic, Thomas suggests Spinach & Feta Alligator, a vegetable-stuffed turnover, which she gives us the option of shaping and decorating to look like an alligator's head. A Chocolate Spongecake with dried apricots and cinnamon is a moist surprise that can be made richer with a raspberry coulis and whipped cream, if you like.

Thomas has a distinctly Californian voice and palate, which might frustrate some East Coast readers who may not be able to find the *nopalitos* (cactus pads) called for in a number of recipes. On balance, however, the California influence means she's a laid-back spirit—laidback enough to include her husband's instructions for spit-roasting a turkey in a chapter titled “Thanksgiving for Everyone.”

Natalie Danford eats her vegetables in New York City. ♦

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

Chez Panisse Vegetables, by Alice Waters & the cooks at Chez Panisse. Harper Collins, 1996.

\$32.50, hardcover; 344 pp.
ISBN 0-06-017147-2.

Red, White & Greens: The Italian Way with Vegetables, by Faith Willinger. Harper Collins, 1996.

\$25, hardcover; 336 pp. ISBN 0-06-018366-7.

The Vegetarian Table: North Africa, by Kitty Morse. Chronicle, 1996. \$22.95, hardcover; 168 pp. ISBN 0-8118-0694-4.

The New Vegetarian Epicure, by Anna Thomas. Knopf, 1996. \$19, softcover; 449 pp. ISBN 0-679-76588-3.

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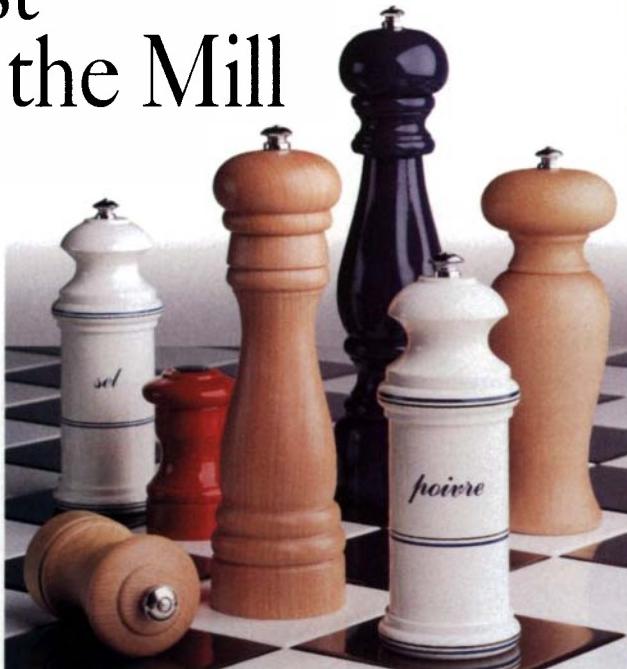
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Reader Service No.	ADVERTISER	Page No.	Reader Service No.	ADVERTISER	Page No.	Reader Service No.	ADVERTISER	Page No.	Reader Service No.	ADVERTISER	Page No.
74	Ale in the Mail	10	61	Chefwear	15	97	Honorable Jane Co.	91	89	Rhode School of Cuisine	90
37	American Vintage Wine Biscuits	28	43	Chesapeake Bay Gourmet	91	53	House on the Hill	89	34	Royalty Seafood	93
77	Andre Prost	28	91	Cocoa Montana	91	109	Indian Harvest	93	95	Sanctuary Much	89
26	Antique Mall & Crown Restaurant	81	101	The Compleat Cooker	90	66	Jamison Farm	92	Scottsdale Culinary Institute	89	
	Armeno Coffee	93	88	Contemporary Culinary Design	27	90	Jessica's Biscuit	89	12	Shaw Guides	91
68	Arome International	10	8	Cookbooks by Morris Press	93	103	Kelly & Sons	93	96	Smith Cutlery	92
59	B & L Specialty Foods	90	81	Cooke's Edge	92	25	Kevlar 3-Ply Glove	92	99	Sowul Farms	83
98	Banton Peppermills	87	94	Cook's Illustrated	92	29	Kirkland Custom Seafoods	83	72	Spice Island	2
93	Bar-B-Que Specialties	91	69	Culinary Newsletters	13	44	Kitchenaid	24	49	Strawberry Hill Bakery	19
11	BelGioioso Cheese	27	80	Culinary Software	90	31	Knife Merchant	90	106	Sullivan College	83
39	Bertolli Olive Oil	11	40	Dacor Cooktops	23	9	Le Jardin du Gourmet	91	30	Sunrise Gourmet Products	93
1	Bilinski's Mailbox Gourmet	91	57	Drannan Company	91	46	Lifetime Career Schools	93	87	Swanson Broth/Pepperidge Farm	77
23	Bobby Pope's Mom's Poundcake	90	82	EarthStone Wood-Fire Ovens	92	33	Maple Leaf Farms	81	6	Swissco Foods	93
			7	Embellishments	91	33	Mar-Beck Appliance Parts	89	35	Taylor Flaggate First Estate Port	31
78	Bright Idea the Right Idea - Mango Chutney	73	85	Epicurean Technologies	26	67	Middlesex Farm	90	10	Teitel Bros.	92
79	Bright Idea the Right Idea - Frozen Drinks	93	75	Fancy Foods Gourmet Club	92	24	MNS Software	93	35	Top Hat Company	91
			63	Fatsoff Soup Scoup	93	102	Mount Horeb Mustard Museum	21	84	Upton Tea Imports	92
47	The British Shoppe	89	70	Ferrari-Carano Wines	103	21	Mugnaini Imports	81	48	Vacmaster	93
80	Brother Kitchen Assistant	25	105	Floura Wild Rice	90	15	National Pork Prod. Council	3	3	Vantage Press	93
58	Butch Long's Steaks	79	13	Flying Noodle	92	86	New England Cheesemaking Sup. Co.	89	107	Viking Penguin Books	85
27	Cabot Creamery	91	65	Fortuna's Sausage	90	52	Oxo International	13	104	Vineyard Valley Foods	93
111	Cambridge School of Culinary Arts	89	100	French Culinary Institute	21	64	Peco Uniforms	29	42	Western Culinary Institute	83
			14	Fungus Foods	91	2	Pepper Mill Imports	91	92	Wild Thymes	90
45, 51	Chef Direct	90, 92	32	G & R Publishing Co.	90	110	Phillips Mushrooms	92	22	Wilma Saxton	90
76	Chef Revival	85	19	Game Sales International	21	Prof. Cutlery Dir.	91, 92	20	Windsor Vineyards	21	
	Chef's Choice	79	60	Godiva Chocolates	7	83	Professional Home Kitchens	90	108	The Wine Professor	89
54	Chef's Collection	93	36	Heartland Appliances	13	17	Rafal Spice Co.	90	56	Wolf Range Co.	9
				Hendrix Farms	27	Reynolds Wrap	17	50	Wood Prairie Farm	89	
								71	Wowie Gourmet Onions	92	

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Holiday Open House & Wine Tastings—December 6, Murphys. Stroll the historic streets of an old gold mining town in the heart of the Sierra Foothills wine region. Sample wines from Black Sheep, Chatom, Iron Stone, Indian Rock, Stevenot and other Calaveras County wineries. Call 209/736-0049.

Holiday Wine Tour—December 7–8, Livermore Valley. Tour area wineries for wine tastings and sample the winery's own hors d'oeuvres from a new cookbook published by the Livermore Valley Wine Growers Association. Call 510/447-WINE.

Toast the Holidays—December 7, Yountville. Napa Valley's famous wines paired with food from Yountville's award-winning restaurants. Area chefs will hold cooking demonstrations. Call 800/959-3604.

COLORADO

Cooking Classes & Demonstrations—Cooking School of the Rockies, Boulder. December 8: Sautéing Techniques. December 10: Exquisite Holiday Desserts. December 12: An Elegant Holiday Dinner for Friends. December 15: Flambé. January 13: Chef Carlo Lima, Antica Roma Restaurant. January 20: Chef Alan André, European Café. January 27: Chef Hung Louie, Silver Palace Restaurant. January 10 through February 7: Pastry Techniques—five-session course, taught by expert pastry chef Diana Hoguet, that explores all aspects of pastry, pie, and cake baking. January 15: Croissants, Danish & Yeasted Breakfast Pastries. January 19: Chocolate Mastery Workshop. Call 303/494-7988

CONNECTICUT

An American Vintner in Tuscany—November 18, Greenwich Civic Center, Greenwich. A Banfi wine-tasting program and wine dinner prepared by area restaurant chefs. Sponsored by The American Institute of Wine & Food, Connecticut Chapter. Call 203/967-6238.

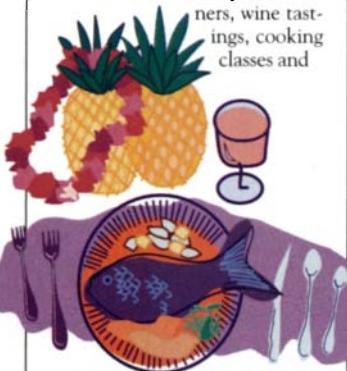
Cooking Classes—Prudence Sloane's Cooking School, Hampton. December 10: A Dickens Christmas—Duck and Goose Cookery. December 19: Do Ahead Christmas Desserts. January 4: French Bistro—The Country Cuisine of France. January 9: Tools of the Trade—Knife Skills Workshop. January 13, 16, 20, 23: The Art & Science of Cooking I (four-part series). Call 860/455-0596.

FLORIDA

Cookbook Sale—December 6–7, Port St. Lucie Community Center, Port St. Lucie. Community cookbook sale held in honor of the 25th anniversary of the Port St. Lucie Branch Library. To donate cookbooks for the sale or for sale hours, call 407/871-5450.

HAWAII

Grand Chefs on Tour—Kea Lani Hotel, Wailea, Maui. A week-long Culinary Fantasy Camp featuring world-renowned chefs and winemakers paired with Hawaiian chefs for special dinners, wine tastings, cooking classes and



seminars. December 2–8: Chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger—Border Grill, Los Angeles; Chef Mark Ellman—Avalon, Maui. For reservations, call Armida Chamberlain at 800/659-4100, ext. 236.

LOUISIANA

Cooking Classes—Cookin' Cajun Cooking School, Riverwalk Market Place, New Orleans. Ongoing classes featuring Cajun and Creole cooking, plus local history. Call 504/523-6425.

A New Orleans Christmas—Celebrate the holidays New Orleans style with events organized by French Quarter Festivals. Call 504/522-5730 for a brochure. A sample of the offerings: December 4, 11, 18: Holiday Chefs Cooking Class, New Orleans School of Cooking. Well-known area chefs demonstrate holiday meals with Italian, Continental, and Southern menus. December 1–24: Reveillon Holiday Dinners. French Quarter restaurants offer the "Reveillon," traditional four-course meals. December 8: Madrigal Dinner, O'Flaherty's Irish Channel Pub.

MASSACHUSETTS

Benjamin Franklin's Birthday Dinner—January 17, Maison Robert, Old City Hall, Boston. Celebrate one of America's premier statesmen, scientists, and gourmands at a dinner featuring the kinds of food and wine he may have enjoyed while in France 1776–1785. Call 617/227-3370 or 3371.

NEW YORK

Cooking Classes—Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, New York City. December 1: Christmas in Provence. December 5: Truffles, Bon Bons & Fudge. December 11–13: The Joys of Holiday Baking. December 13: An Italian Christmas. Call 800/522-4610.

Cuisine Magic 1997—January 12, Omni Albany Hotel, Albany. Sample award-winning dishes prepared by 13 of the area's finest chefs. Sponsored by the American Culinary Federation. Call Robin Christenson at 518/274-0190.

A New York Christmas—December 9, Metropolitan Pavilion, 110 W. 19th St., New York City. Specialties of 20 notable restaurants, with complimentary wines. Sponsored by The Volunteers of America. Call 212/873-2600, ext. 116. **Short Courses for the Serious Amateur**—The French Culinary Institute, New York City. December 7 to May 31: La Technique—A thorough overview of classical French cooking. January 21 to February 20: Specialties in Pastry. February 8 to July 19: Mini-Pastry. Call 212/219-8890 or 888/FCI-CHEF.

Venetian Carnival—January 27, Felidia Ristorante, New York City. A celebration of Veneto Carnevale with a five-course regional dinner with paired wines and cultural presentations. Call Raymond Buckler or Amgad Wahba at 212/758-1479.

OREGON

Cooking Classes—Western Culinary Institute, Portland. December 1 or January 26: Chocolate Workshop. December 7: Holiday Cooking. December 7 or February 8: Ice Carving. December 14: Brunch Workshop. January 25: Southeast Asian Cuisine. Call 800/666-0312.

PENNSYLVANIA

Ice Cream Short Course—January 6–16, Penn State University Park Campus. Intensive ice-cream making course. Call 814/865-8301.

TENNESSEE

12th Annual Gingerbread World Competition, Display & Silent Auction—December 7–15, Loews Vanderbilt Plaza Hotel, Nashville. Contest entry deadline: December 5. December 7, 8, 12, 15: Children's Gingerbread Workshops. December 15: Celebrity Story Telling. December 8: Family Holiday Brunch. Call Elizabeth Papel or Deb Hudson 615/460-4000.

VERMONT

Bradford Wild Game Supper—November 23, Congregational United Church of Christ, Bradford. Ten different species of wild game in a variety of dishes. For reservations, call Bobby Green at 802/222-4670.

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Bellycheer: Dining in England 1580–1640—starting November 8 and ongoing, Agecroft Hall Museum, Richmond. Tour a reconstructed English manor house; learn about eating habits of the landed gentry in late Tudor and early Stuart England; how food moved from field to table, dining customs and etiquette. Call 804/353-4241.

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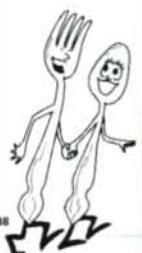
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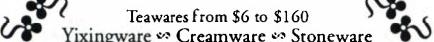
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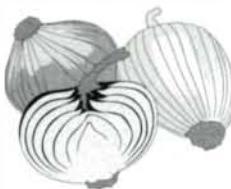
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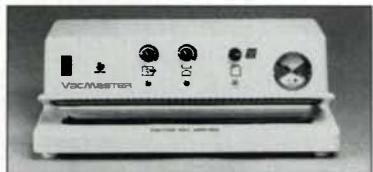
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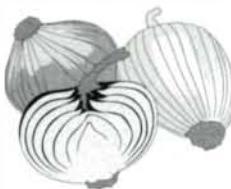
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RECIPES**COVER RECIPE**

Roast Turkey 37

APPETIZERS

Anchoiade 68

Bagna Cauda 68

DESSERTS, CAKES & PASTRY

Cheese Coins 46

Chocolate Steamed Pudding 48

Cranberry Tartlets 50

Downtown Bakery's Sticky Buns 75

Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit
Compote & Applesauce 47Holiday Butter Cookies with Lemon
Curd 46**MAIN DISHES****Fish/Shellfish**

Creole Court Bouillon 60

Salmon Solianka 61

Seafood Chowder 61

MeatLeg of Lamb Stuffed with Anchovies
& Tarragon 69**Poultry**

Roast Duck or Goose 37

Roast Turkey 37

Vegetable

Winter-Vegetable Braise 42

**SAUCES, CONDIMENTS
& SEASONINGS**

Fruit Salsas

Citrus Salsa 52

Cranberry-Pear Salsa 53

Tropical Salsa 53

Stuffings

Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 39

Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster
Stuffing 39**SIDE DISHES**Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing
39

Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 39

Winter-Vegetable Braise 42

Braised Escarole with a Parmesan
Crust 43

Orange-Glazed Carrots with Mint 43

Roasted Curried Broccoli &
Cauliflower 43**SOUPS, STEWS & STOCKS**

Basic Fish Stock 59

Creole Court Bouillon 60

Salmon Solianka 61

Seafood Chowder 61

TECHNIQUES

Baking potatoes 5

Braising vegetables 41

Carving a turkey 18–20

Chilling food in an ice bath 76

Cleaning fish bones 58

Deglazing braised vegetables 41

Filleting salt-packed anchovies 68

Making croissant dough 70–74

Making fruit salsas 51–52

Making gravy 36

Making sticky buns 70–75

Making stuffing 38

Matching stuffings to birds 38

Menu planning 45

Proofing yeast 70

Rendering bacon 38

Roasting duck, goose & turkey 35–36

Slow roasting vegetables 42

Starting dough in a well 76

Sweating vegetables 58

Trussing 35

Turning croissant dough 72–73

INGREDIENTSAnchovies, about 66–68; choosing
67–68; canned 66, 67; filleting &
storing 68; oil-packed 67, 68; salt-
packed 67–68; using 66–67

Bacon, rendering 38

Bread for stuffing 38

Butter, making a butter block 71

Cinnamon, about 80; cassia 80;
Ceylon 82; Chinese cassia 82;
choosing 82; Vietnamese cassia 82

Dough, starting in a well 76

Duck, choosing 32; roasting 35–36;
sources for 32; trussing 35Fish bones, buying 58; choosing 58;
cleaning 58Fish stock, bones for 57–58;
making 57–59

Fruit, choosing for salsas 52

Goose, choosing 32; roasting 33–36;
sources for 32; trussing 35

Gravy, roasting 36

Potatoes, baking 54; best varieties
for baking 54; choosing 54;
temperatures for baking 55;
twice-baked 55Turkey, carving 18–20; choosing 32;
roasting 33–36; sources for 32;
trussing 35

Twice-baked potatoes 55

Vegetables, braising 41; deglazing 41;
roasting 42**TOOLS**

Aluminum pans 64

Anodized-aluminum pans 61, 64

Cast iron pans 62, 64, 65

Copper pans 62, 64

Enamelled cast-iron pans 62, 64, 65

Lids, choosing 62

Nonstick pans 62, 64, 65

Pots & pans, choosing 61–65

Roasting pans 32

Saucepans 64

Sauté pans 61, 63

Stainless-steel pans 61, 64

Stockpots 64

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories total from fat		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	sat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Roast Turkey	37	290	80	49	0	9	3	2	2	130	210	0	6 oz., no skin
Roast Duck	37	350	190	39	0	21	7	8	3	145	500	0	6 oz., no skin
Roast Goose	37	410	200	48	0	23	8	8	3	160	360	0	6 oz., no skin
Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing	39	350	190	14	25	21	9	9	2	60	880	1	1/6 recipe
Cornbread Pecan Stuffing	39	350	250	8	22	27	7	14	5	100	450	3	1/6 recipe
Winter-Vegetable Braise	42	160	60	6	22	7	4	2	1	20	380	8	side dish portion
Braised Escarole with a Parmesan Crust	43	200	150	5	6	16	3	11	1	5	290	2	
Orange-Glazed Carrots with Mint	43	190	70	2	31	7	1	2	4	0	450	5	
Roasted Curried Broccoli & Cauliflower	43	170	100	6	16	11	2	3	6	0	330	7	
Cheese Coins	46	130	80	4	11	9	5	3	0	25	240	1	5 crackers
Holiday Butter Cookies with Lemon Curd	46	270	140	4	30	15	9	5	1	110	15	1	per cookie
Ginger Cake, Fruit Compote, Applesauce	47	840	240	10	149	26	15	8	2	140	260	7	
Chocolate Steamed Pudding	48	680	350	12	85	39	20	14	2	190	350	8	w/o crème fraîche
Cranberry Tartlets	50	180	70	1	25	8	5	2	0	20	0	1	per tartlet
Citrus Salsa	52	30	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	10	1	per 1/4 cup
Tropical Salsa	53	20	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	10	1	per 1/4 cup
Cranberry-Pear Salsa	53	60	10	0	14	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	10	1	per 1/4 cup
Creole Court Bouillon	60	350	120	33	21	13	2	3	7	50	540	4	
Seafood Chowder	61	680	410	34	29	45	22	16	4	210	1010	3	
Salmon Solianka	61	410	180	44	13	20	8	7	4	105	1830	2	
Anchoiade	68	60	50	3	0	5	1	4	1	10	330	0	per tablespoon
Bagna Cauda	68	110	90	4	0	10	2	7	1	15	550	0	per tablespoon
Leg of Lamb with Anchovies & Tarragon	69	370	130	54	3	15	5	6	1	170	800	3	1/8 recipe
Downtown Bakery's Sticky Buns	75	530	210	6	76	24	14	7	1	65	470	2	per sticky bun

Please note that calories from fat are now presented as the actual number rather than as a percentage. Nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first ingredient is the one used in

the calculations. When salt and pepper are to taste, estimates of average amounts used are included. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

1996 INDEX

Covering issues 13-18

A

- Adams, Jody, "Slow Cooking Enhances Winter Vegetables" 18:40-43
"Adding Flavor to Butter" 13:44-45
Albert, Amy, "Choosing Pots and Pans to Improve Your Cooking" 18:61-65
Alcohol in sorbets 16:69
Alford, Katherine
 "Making a Country Pâté" 17:57-61
 "One Stock Makes Three Flavorful Fish Stews" 18:56-60
Allspice 14:24
Almond paste 13:10
Aluminum pans 18:64
Anchovies
 about 18:66-68
 Anchoiade 18:68
 Bagna Cauda 18:68
 canned 18:66, 67
 choosing 18:67-68
 filleting & storing 18:68
 Leg of Lamb Stuffed with Anchovies & Tarragon 18:69
 oil-packed 18:67-68
 salt-packed 18:67-68
 using 18:66-67
Anise: Drunken Figs with Anise 17:39
Anodized-aluminum pans 18:61, 18:64
Appetizers
 Anchoiade 18:68
 Artichoke & Sausage Cakes 14:39
 Artichoke Pesto 14:39
 Bagna Cauda 18:68
 Baked Marinated Eggplant 17:37
 Batter-Fried Zucchini & Blossoms 16:45
 Beef Picadillo Empanadas 13:60
 Boned Whole Trout with Mushroom Stuffing & Herb-Butter Sauce 14:61
 Chicken Tostada Pequena 14:56
 Chiles Frios (Guacamole in roasted green chiles) 16:34
 Classic Steamed Mussels in White Wine 13:31
 Country Pâté with Pistachios 17:61
 Crabmeat-Avocado Quesadillas 14:56
 Fresh Corn & Cheese Tamales 17:56
 Hoisin Beef & Scallion Rolls 14:55
 Mussels Stuffed with Spinach & Parmesan 13:32
 Peppered Shrimp 14:55
 Smoked Salmon Cucumber Rolls 14:55
 Spicy Beef Tamales 17:56
 Sweet Potato Tamales 17:56
 Tri-Color Polenta Cups 14:55
 Vegetable & Tomato Mousse Terrine 15:65
 Wild Mushroom & Cheese Empanadas 13:60
Apples
 Apple-Brandy Puffy Pancake 17:47
 Apple-Rhubarb Crisp 14:71
 Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce 18:47
 Pork Tenderloin with Apple Chutney 14:30

"Art of Menu-Making, The" 13:38-43

- Artichokes
 about 14:37-40
 Artichoke & Sausage Cakes 14:39
 Artichoke Gratin 17:44
 Artichoke Pesto 14:39
 Artichokes & Fava Beans 14:40
Asian noodles 14:72
Asian Spice Rub 14:65
Asparagus
 about 14:10
 Mushrooms, Asparagus & Sunchokes 15:44-45
 peeling 14:72
Avocado
 Chiles Frios (Guacamole in roasted green chiles) 16:34
 Crabmeat-Avocado Quesadillas 14:56

B

- "Backyard Barbecue, North Carolina Style, A" 15:36-41
Bacon
 about 16:72
 Hot Cider-Bacon Vinaigrette 13:36
 rendering 18:38
 Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Cayenne-Toasted Pecans 16:39
"Bad Case of Raspberry Fever" 15:94
Bagels cutting 16:26
Baker's cheese 17:8
Baker, Dennis, "Three Hearty Chicken Fricassées" 17:48-51
Bakeware, Calphalon 17:18
"Baking Golden Vegetable Gratin" 17:40-44
Baking
 chewy oatmeal cookies 17:8
 eggplant 17:37
 empanadas 13:59
 on a stone 16:47
 pâté in a water bath 17:60
 potatoes 18:55
 shortbread 14:48
 southern biscuits 14:43
 stones 16:26
 tender, flaky pie crust 17:78
 tiles, lead-free 18:6
 tips 13:22; 14:20; 15:30; 17:32
 vegetable gratins 17:40-44
 with rhubarb 14:70
Baking powder, making 14:42
Bamboo steamers 15:52
Barbecuing pork 15:39
Barshak, Alison, "Steaming Seafood for Clear, Pure Flavors" 15:50-54
Basil
 Mint & Basil Pesto 16:45
 Orange-Basil Sorbet 16:71
Bean threads 14:72
Beans
 Bolognese Borlotti Beans 15:49
 choosing for salads 15:47-48
 cooking 15:47-48
 dried 15:16
 Garlic-Herb Green Beans 16:61
 Green & Wax Beans with Brown Butter 15:45
 Long-Cooked Green Beans with Oregano 17:38
 Spicy Pasta e Fagioli 15:48
 Tuscan White Bean Salad 15:49

Beef

- Beef Picadillo Empanadas 13:60
Braised Beef 17:38
Hoisin Beef & Scallion Rolls 14:55
Phở 17:66
Short Ribs Braised in Red Wine 13:42
Spicy Beef Tamales 17:56
Beets
 Fresh Beet Salad 13:41
 Pickled Beets with an Orange Accent 16:61
Benriner slicer correction 14:8
Berries, about 15:12-14 (see also specific entries)
Berry, Elizabeth 15:16
Bertolli, Paul
 "Art of Menu-Making" 13:38-43
 "Bold or Mellow, Anchovies Add Mediterranean Flavor" 18:66-69
 "Traditional Southern Italian Ragù" 17:34-39
Beurre manié 17:49
Biscuits
 choosing flour 14:41-42
 handling dough 14:42-43
 punching 14:43
 rolling 14:43
 southern 14:43
 sweetening 14:43
Blackberries 15:12
Blanching
 garlic 14:33
 nuts 17:76
 peaches 16:50
Bloom, Carole, "Great Shortbread Begins with Butter" 14:46-49
Blueberries
 about 15:12
 Cinnamon-Cornbread Cobbler with Blueberries 15:41
"Bold or Mellow, Anchovies Add Mediterranean Flavor" 18:66-69
Boning
 chicken thighs 17:22
 trout 14:57-58
Bonny Doon Cassis 17:18
Book reviews
 Bernard Clayton's *New Complete Book of Breads*, by Bernard Clayton 14:78
 Bread Alone, by Daniel Leader & Judith Blahnik 14:81
 Chez Panisse Vegetables, by Alice Waters 18:84
 Encyclopedia of Fish Cookery, The, by A. J. McClane 17:82
 English Bread & Yeast Cookery, by Elizabeth David 14:78
 Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking, by Marcella Hazan 15:82
 Fine Preserving, by Catherine Plagemann, annotated by M. F. K. Fisher 16:82
 Fish & Shellfish: The Cook's Indispensable Companion, by James Peterson 17:82
 Fish: The Complete Guide to Buying & Cooking, by Mark Bittman 17:84
 Heritage of Southern Cooking, The, by Camille Glenn 13:77
 Hoppin' John's Lowcountry Cooking, by John Martin Taylor 13:76

Book reviews (continued)

- Italian Baker, The*, by Carol Field 14:78-80
 Italian Food, by Elizabeth David 15:83
 Modern Seafood Cook, The, by Edward Brown & Arthur Boehm 17:84
 New Vegetarian Epicure, The, by Anna Thomas 18:86
 Preserving Today, by Jeanne Lesem 16:82
 Putting Food By, by Janet Greene et al. 16:80
 Red, White & Greens: The Italian Way with Vegetables, by Faith Willinger 18:84
 Southern Cooking, by Bill Neal 13:77
 Southern Food, by John Egerton 13:76
 Splendid Table, The, by Lynne Rossetto Kasper 15:80
 Stocking Up, by Carol Huppung 16:80
 Taste of Tuscany, A, by John Dore Meis 15:80
 Vegetarian Table: North Africa, by Kitty Morse 18:86
 Village Baker, by Joe Ortiz 14:80
 "Boston Brown Bread Cooks in a Steamer" 13:51-53
Boston brown bread made on a woodstove 15:10
Bourbon vanilla 18:10
Boysenberries 15:14
Braising
 beef 17:36
 trout 14:59-60
 vegetables 18:41
Bread
 Boston Brown Bread 13:53
 Downtown Bakery's Sticky Buns 18:75
 for bread salads 15:32
 for stuffing 18:38
 Genuine Southern Biscuits 14:43
 Italian Bread Salad (Panzanella) 15:35
 Middle Eastern Bread Salad (Fattoush) 15:35
 proofing 14:22
 Rosemary Flatbread 16:47
 Turkish Bread & Olive Salad 15:34
Brennan, Georgeanne, "How to Handle Artichokes" 14:36-40
"Bright, Tart Rhubarb Desserts" 14:66-71
Broccoli: Roasted Curried Broccoli & Cauliflower 18:43
Browning
 beef & vegetables for ragù 17:36
 chicken for a fricassée 17:49
Btu vs. watts 17:6
Butter
 beurre manié 17:49
 clarifying 15:28
 Classic French Buttercream 14:19
 compound butters
 flavoring 13:44-45
 freezing 13:45
 mixing 13:44-45
 rolling 13:45
 sautéing flavorings 13:44
 storing 13:45

B
 Butter (*continued*)
 for shortbread 14:46
 Herb-Butter Sauce 14:61
 in pie crusts 17:78–79
 making a butter block 18:71
 sauce 14:58, 14:60–61
 seasoning with herbs 14:58, 14:61
 softening 13:44
 Buttercream, Classic French 14:18–19
 Butternut Squash Gratin
 with Onions & Sage 17:44

C

Cabinets 17:24–28
 Cabbages
 about 13:8
 crisping with salt 17:30
 Overnight Coleslaw with
 Mustard Seed 15:40
 stuffing tips 13:22
 types of 13:8–10
 Winter-Vegetable Braise 18:42
 Cake pans, coating 15:30
 Calphalon bakeware 17:18
 Canadian bacon 16:74
 Candy zest 13:48
 Canners 16:60
 Canning 16:60–61
 Canning jars 16:60
 Cantaloupe, cutting tips 13:21
 Carrots
 Gingered Zucchini &
 Carrots 15:45
 Orange-Glazed Carrots with
 Mint 18:43
 Carving a turkey 18:18–20
 Casas, Penelope, "The Magic of the
 Mortar & Pestle" 14:44–45
 Cassis, Bonny Doon 17:18
 Cast-iron pans 18:62, 18:64, 18:65
 Cauliflower: Roasted Curried Broccoli
 & Cauliflower 18:43
 Celery root: Celery Root & Potato
 Gratin 17:44
 Chambord: Raspberry-Chambord
 Sorbet 16:70
 Charring onions 16:53
 Cheese
 baker's cheese 17:8
 Cheese Coins 18:46
 Curly Endive with Walnuts, Pears
 & Goat Cheese 13:37
 feta 16:12
 Fig & Cheese Empanadas 13:61
 Fresh Corn & Cheese
 Tamales 17:56
 grating 16:26
 Puffy Pancake with Red Pepper &
 Goat Cheese 17:47
 use for rinds 16:28
 Chef's knives 15:76–77
 Cherries
 Lemon Tart with Dried Sour
 Cherries 13:49
 Peaches with Dried-Cherry
 Shortcake 16:50
 Chesman, Andrea, "Pickles by the
 Pint" 16:58–61
 "Chicken Pot Pie Warms a Chilly
 Night" 13:24–28
 Chiles
 Chiles Frios (Guacamole in roasted
 green chiles) 16:34
 choosing 16:32–33
 combining 16:32
 cutting tips 13:20; 17:32

Chiles (*continued*)
 Grilled Pico de Gallo (Chunky
 vegetable salsa) 16:35
 grilling 16:34
 heat source 14:6
 peeling 16:34
 Pickled Chile Peppers 16:61
 preserving 14:22
 Chilling food in an ice bath 18:76
 Chinese cleavers 13:62–63
 Chocolate (*see also* Cocoa)
 Caramelized Allspice Oranges &
 Chocolate Mousse 13:49
 Chocolate Steamed
 Pudding 18:48
 Chocolate-Nut Bark 13:67
 choosing 13:66
 Macadamia Trios 13:67
 melting 13:65–66
 Pecan-Nougat Chocolates 13:66
 pot-tempering 13:65–66
 storing 13:67
 tips for working with 13:65
 "Choosing Pots and Pans to Improve
 Your Cooking" 18:61–65
 Choosing vegetables for a gratin 17:42
 Cider: Hot Cider-Bacon
 Vinaigrette 13:36
 Cinnamon
 about 18:80
 cassia 18:80
 Ceylon 18:82
 Chinese cassia 18:82
 choosing 18:82
 Cinnamon-Cornbread Cobbler
 with Blueberries 15:41
 Downtown Bakery's Sticky
 Buns 18:75
 in baked goods 15:22
 Vietnamese cassia 18:82
 "Citrus Fruits Brighten Dessert"
 13:46–50
 Citrus
 candied zest 13:48
 choosing 13:48
 Citrus Salsa 18:52
 pairing with other flavors 13:50
 sectioning 13:47–48
 zesting 13:48; 15:28
 Clarifying butter 15:28
 "Clean Cuts with a Chinese Cleaver"
 13:62–63
 Cleaver blade covers 18:30
 Clips, uses for 14:22
 Cocoa
 about 17:69
 Cocoa Walnut Butter
 Cookies 17:73
 Dutch-processed 17:69–71
 Frozen Mocha 17:72
 Hot Cocoa 17:72
 natural 17:69–71
 Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge
 Sauce 17:71
 Rich Cocoa Brownies 17:72
 Coconut: Coconut Meringues 15:72
 Coleslaw: Overnight Coleslaw with
 Mustard Seed 15:40
 Compound butters (*see* Butter)
 Cooking school guide 15:16
 Cookware (*See* Pots & pans or specific
 entries)
 "Cool Sorbets, Intensely Flavored"
 16:67–71
 Copper pans 18:62, 18:64

Corn
 Fresh Corn & Cheese
 Tamales 17:56
 Potato Salad with Seafood &
 Sweet Corn 16:40
 Roasted Corn 15:40
 Cornbread
 Cinnamon-Cornbread Cobbler
 with Blueberries 15:41
 Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 18:39
 Cornhusks 17:53
 Court bouillon, for trout 14:59–61
 Couscous
 Couscous Timbale 16:66
 Steamed Salmon with Saffron
 Vegetable Broth &
 Couscous 15:53
 Cranberries
 Cranberry Tartlets 18:50
 Cranberry-Pear Salsa 18:53
 Cream cheese, softening 18:30
 Cream of tartar 14:15
 Cream pies, tips 18:78
 "Crisp & Fragrant Chicken Bastila"
 16:54–57
 Cucumbers
 Dill Chips 16:61
 Smoked Salmon Cucumber
 Rolls 14:55
 Curdling, fixing with lecithin 15:8

D

Decorating buffet tables 14:54
 Defatting stock 15:30
 Deglazing
 braised vegetables 18:41
 for a *ragù* 17:38
 "Delicious Pairing of Pasta & Beans,
 The" 15:46–49
 "Dessert Buffet for a Relaxed Party, A"
 18:44–50
 Desserts, cakes & pastry
 Apple-Brandy Puffy
 Pancake 17:47
 Apple-Rhubarb Crisp 14:71
 Baked Stuffed Peaches with a
 Late-Harvest Riesling
 Sauce 16:51
 Basic Puffy Pancake 17:47
 cakes
 Chocolate Steamed
 Pudding 18:48
 Cinnamon-Cornbread Cob-
 bler with Blueberries 15:41
 Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit
 Compote & Applesauce 18:47
 Grapefruit Upside-Down Cake
 with Rosemary 13:48
 Passionfruit Pound Cake 15:73
 candies
 Chocolate-Nut Bark 13:67
 Macadamia Trios 13:67
 Pecan-Nougat
 Chocolates 13:66
 Caramelized Allspice Oranges &
 Chocolate Mousse 13:49
 Classic French Buttercream 14:19
 cookies
 Cheese Coins 18:46
 Cocoa Walnut Butter
 Cookies 17:73
 Coconut Meringues 15:72
 Holiday Butter Cookies with
 Lemon Curd 18:46
 Cranberry Tartlets 18:50

Desserts, cakes & pastry (*continued*)
 Drunken Figs with Anise 17:39
 frozen desserts
 Frozen Mocha 17:72
 Nougat Glacé 15:60
 Grilled Pineapple with Butter-
 Rum Sauce 16:35
 Hot Cocoa 17:72
 Lemon Tart with Dried Sour
 Cherries 13:49
 Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge
 Sauce 17:71
 Passionfruit & Citrus Salad 15:72
 pastries
 Downtown Bakery's Sticky
 Buns 18:75
 Fig & Cheese
 Empanadas 13:61
 Peach Tart 16:51
 Peaches with Dried-Cherry
 Shortcake 16:50
 Raspberry Coulis 15:60
 Rhubarb Compote with Oranges
 & Figs 14:71
 Rhubarb-Ginger Fool 14:70
 Rhubarb-Raspberry Galette 14:70
 Rich Cocoa Brownies 17:72
 Rough Puff Pastry 13:27
 shortbread
 Classic Scottish 14:48
 Ginger 14:49
 Hazelnut 14:49
 Orange 14:49
 Spicy 14:49
 sorbets
 Lemon-Rosemary 16:70
 Mango-Lime 16:71
 Orange-Basil 16:71
 Passionfruit S15:72
 Plum-Raspberry 16:71
 Raspberry-Chambord 16:70
 Strawberry-Grapefruit 16:71
 Winter Fruit Compote 13:43
 Deville, Darren, "Cool Sorbets,
 Intensely Flavored" 16:67–71
 Dill: Dill Chips 16:61
 Dodge, Abigail Johnson, "Fruit Salsas
 that Sparkle" 18:51–53
 Dooley, Beth, "Summer Vegetables
 Make a Swift Sauté" 15:42–45
 Dough
 Croissant Dough 18:75
 Empanada Dough 13:60–61
 fats effect on 13:58
 Flatbread Dough 16:47
 Galette Dough 14:70
 handling biscuit dough 14:42–43
 kneading 15:74
 Pasta Dough 13:57
 rolling 16:26
 Rough Puff Pastry 13:27
 starting in a well 18:76
 Tart Dough 13:49; 16:51
 Tartlet Dough 18:50
 Dry ingredients, measuring 13:68
 Drying greens 14:22
 Dumplings: Chicken &
 Dumplings 17:51
 Duxelles, making 14:58–59, 14:61

E

Eggplant
 about 16:14
 Baked Marinated Eggplant 17:37
 choosing 16:14

1996 INDEX

Eggplant (continued)
Grilled Pizza with Tomato-Balsamic Sauce, Chicken & Eggplant 15:57
peeling 16:14
Eggs
omelets 16:18-20
roles in cooking 14:76-77
whites 14:77
yolks 14:76
Empanadas 13:58-59
Emulsifiers 15:79
Emulsifying
oil & water 15:78
vinaigrettes 14:12
Emulsions 15:78-79
Enamelled cast-iron pans 18:62-65
Endive: Curly Endive with Walnuts, Pears & Goat Cheese 13:37
Enzymes, controlling 18:78
Escarole: Braised Escarole with a Parmesan Crust 18:43
"Exploding Desserts on a Western River" 16:90

F

Fat back 16:74; 17:58
Fats
in pie crusts 17:78-79
effect on dough 13:58
Fava beans: Artichokes & Fava Beans 14:40
Fennel
Simple Salad of Watercress, Leek & Fennel 13:37
Winter-Vegetable Braise 18:42
Figs
Drunken Figs with Anise 17:39
Fig & Cheese Empanadas 13:61
Rhubarb Compote with Oranges & Figs 14:71
Filleting salt-packed anchovies 18:68
Fish & shellfish
choosing for steaming 15:52-53
clams
steaming 17:12
Steamed Clams with Garlic & Tomato 15:54
Crabmeat-Avocado Quesadillas 14:56
Fish Stock, Basic 18:59
grilling tips 13:20
Grouper, Steamed, with Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto 15:53
Halibut with Scallions & Sesame Oil 15:53
mussels
Angel Hair Pasta with Mussels & Spicy Tomato Sauce 13:32
buying 13:29-30
Classic Steamed Mussels in White Wine 13:31
cleaning 13:30-31
cultivated 13:30
Mussels Stuffed with Spinach & Parmesan 13:32
Seafood Chowder 18:61
steaming 13:31
storing 13:30
Thai Mussel Soup 13:33
wild 13:30
oysters, Fishers Island 13:14

Fish & shellfish (continued)
salmon
Salmon Solianka 18:61
Smoked Salmon Cucumber Rolls 14:55
Steamed Salmon with Saffron Vegetable Broth & Couscous 15:53
scallops: Seafood Chowder 18:61
Seafood, Potato Salad with, & Sweet Corn 16:40
shellfish: Tomato-Shellfish Ragoût 13:57
shrimp
Peppered Shrimp 14:55
Seafood Chowder 18:61
snapper: Creole Court Bouillon 18:60
steaming 15:50-53
testing for doneness 15:53
trout
Boned Whole Trout with Mushroom Stuffing & Herb-Butter Sauce 14:61
boning 14:57-58
braising 14:59-60
stuffing 14:58-59, 14:61
Fish bones
buying 18:58
choosing 18:58
cleaning 18:58
Fish sauce
about 13:74
choosing 13:74
using 13:74
Fish stock
bones for 18:57-58
making 18:57-59
"Flaky, Buttery Sticky Buns" 18:70-75
Flatbread, Rosemary 16:47
Flavoring butter 13:44-45
Flour
beurre manié 17:49
for biscuits 14:41-42
for shortbread 14:47
freshness 14:47
in pie crusts 17:78-79
sources for southern 14:41
Force meat 17:57-59
Forgione, Larry, "Roasting Your Holiday Bird" 18:32-37
Fredericks, Lynn & Marcey Bassoff, "Yes, You Can Drink Wine with Asian Foods" 14:62-65
Freezing passionfruit 15:71-72
French toast with eggnog 18:30
"Fresh, Briny-Sweet Mussels" 13:29-33
Fromage blanc 13:4
"Fruit Salsas that Sparkle" 18:51-53
Fruit (see also specific entries)
for salsas 18:52
for sorbets 16:68
Ginger Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce 18:47
Winter Fruit Compote 13:43
Fruits & vegetables, prevent browning 18:78
Frying
about 16:78-79
batters & breadings 16:79
fats for 16:79
temperatures for 16:78-79

G

"Garlic Goes from Gentle to Gutsy" 14:31-35
Garlic
about 14:31
Anchoiade 18:68
Bagna Cauda 18:68
blanching 14:33
Caesar Salad Dressing 14:34
Catalan Potatoes 14:34
Chicken with Garlic & Olives 17:50
choosing 14:31-32; 16:28
chopping vs. pressing 18:8
dehydrated 14:33
elephant 14:34
gadgets 16:8, 16:12
Garlic Roast Chicken 14:34
Garlic-Herb Green Beans 16:61
infusing in oil 14:33
peeling 14:32
powder 14:33
pressing 14:32
raw 14:32
removing odor 14:34
roasting 14:33
sautéing 14:32
Steamed Clams with Garlic & Tomato 15:54
Gelatin desserts, tips 18:78
"Genuine Southern Biscuits" 14:41-43
Ginger
Cake with Dried Fruit Compote & Applesauce 18:47
Ginger Shortbread 14:49
Gingered Zucchini & Carrots 15:45
preserving in vodka 13:21
Rhubarb-Ginger Fool 14:70
Glezer, Maggie, "Kitchen Scales for the Savvy Cook" 17:62-63
Grapefruit
Citrus Salsa 18:52
Upside-Down Cake with Rosemary 13:48
Strawberry-Grapefruit Sorbet 16:71
Gratin dishes 17:40
Grating
butter 16:28
cheese 16:26
chocolate 17:18
Gravy roasting 18:36
Gray, Mark, "A Simple Method for Tempering Chocolate" 13:64-67
"Great Shortbread Begins with Butter" 14:46-49
Greens: Winter Greens with Garlic 13:43
"Grilling Pizza on Your Barbecue" 15:55-57
Grilling
chiles 16:34
pizza 15:55-57; 17:6
pork tenderloin 14:29
Grinding spices 14:74
Guacamole: *Chiles Frios* (Guacamole in roasted green chiles) 16:34
Guide to Cooking Schools 15:16
"Guide to Sweet, Tender Zucchini, A" 16:41-45
Guntli, Cathie, "Chicken Pot Pie Warms a Chilly Night" 13:24-28

H

Ham hocks 16:74
Hazelnuts
Hazelnut Shortbread 14:49
skinning 13:21
Herbs (see also specific entries)
for sorbets 16:68
storing 16:26
Honey, measuring 15:10
"How to Handle Artichokes" 14:36-40
Howell, Scott, "A Backyard Barbecue, North Carolina Style" 15:36-41

I

"I Was a 98-Degree Weakling" 17:94
Ice-cream makers 16:70
Ice-cream scoop for batters 15:30
Icing tips 14:22
Infusing oil with garlic 14:33
Irish moss 15:22
Irradiating food 15:8
Italian meringue, making 15:59

J

Jallepalli, Raji, "Three Quick Methods for Pork Tenderloin" 14:26-30
James Beard Foundation Restaurant Guide 16:16
Jarlifters 16:60

K

Keller, Loretta, "A Guide to Sweet, Tender Zucchini" 16:41-45
Kerr, W. Park
"Grilling Pizza on Your Barbecue" 15:55-57
"A Tex-Mex Menu from the Grill" 16:30-35
Ketchup, making 16:52-53
Kinkead, Bob, "Garlic Goes from Gentle to Gutsy" 14:31-35
Kitchen cabinets (see Cabinets)
"Kitchen Scales for the Savvy Cook" 17:62-63
Kitchen scales 15:10; 17:62-63
Kiwi: Tropical Salsa 18:53
Kneading dough 15:74
Knives, sharpness of 14:14
Kroening, Bette, "A Light, Airy Puffy Pancake" 17:45-47

L

Lamb
Loin with Spinach-Merguez Stuffing & Olive-Infused Sauce 16:65
Leg of Lamb Stuffed with Anchovies & Tarragon 18:69
leg 16:63
loin 16:63
trussing & roasting a stuffed lamb loin 16:64-65
Lard, rendering 14:42
Lebovitz, David, "Sweet, Citrusy Passionfruit Accents Desserts" 15:70-73
Lecithin to fix broken sauces 15:8
LeDuc, Paula, "A Spring Buffet: Fresh, Light Food for a Big Crowd" 14:50-56

Leeks
Simple Salad of Watercress, Leek & Fennel 13:37
Vegetable & Tomato Mousse Terrine 15:65
weaving a leek mat 14:54
Winter-Vegetable Braise 18:42

Lemon
freezing tips 13:22
Holiday Butter Cookies with Lemon Curd 18:46
Lemon Tart with Dried Sour Cherries 13:49
Lemon-Rosemary Sorbet 16:70

Lemongrass
as tea 15:8
growing 13:4
Lettuce, storing 13:73
Liaison, binder for fricassée 17:50
Lids
choosing 18:62
storing tips 17:32
"Light, Airy Puffy Pancake" 17:45-47
Lime juice "cooks" fish 13:12
Limes: Mango-Lime Sorbet 16:71
Lining a terrine 15: 63-64; 17:59
Liquid ingredients, measuring 13:68
Loganberries 15:14

M

Macadamias: Macadamia Trios 13:67
Mackie, Leslie, "Making Rustic Rosemary Flatbread" 16:46-47
MacLauchlan, Andrew, "Citrus Fruits Brighten Dessert" 13:46-50
MacNeil, Karen, "What Makes a Good Wine Good?" 15:66-69
Madison, Deborah, "Baking Golden Vegetable Gratin" 17:40-44
Magic Mop grease remover 13:15
"Magic of the Mortar & Pestle, The" 14:44-45
"Making Handkerchief Pasta" 13:54-57
"Making Rustic Rosemary Flatbread" 16:46-47
"Making Vibrant Mediterranean Bread Salads" 15:32-35

Mango
Mango-Lime Sorbet 16:71
Tropical Salsa 18:53
Musa harina 17:53
Master Classes:
"Boning, Stuffing & Braising Trout" 14:57-61
"Flaky, Buttery Sticky Buns" 18:70-75
"Layering Flavors in a Vegetable Terrine" 15:61-65
"Making a Country Pâté" 17:57-61
"Making Handkerchief Pasta" 13:54-57
"Stuffing a Loin of Lamb" 16:62-66

Mayonnaise to keep fish from sticking 13:20
Measuring
by volume 13:68
by weight 13:68
dry ingredients 13:68
honey 15:10
liquid ingredients 13:68
solid fats 16:28
sticky ingredients 16:28

Medrich, Alice "Rediscovering Cocoa," 17:68
Menu planning 13:39-41; 14:50-52; 18:45
Merguez sausage
about 16:63
Lamb Loin with Spinach-Merguez Stuffing & Olive-Infused Sauce 16:65

Metric measurement 15:10
Mint
Mint & Basil Pesto 16:45
Orange-Glazed Carrots with Mint 18:43

Monroe, Judy, "Boston Brown Bread Cooks in a Steamer" 13:51-53

Moreland, Nguyen Thi Thai, "Vietnam's Classic Soup Is a Whole Meal in a Bowl" 17:64

Morse, Kitty, "Crisp & Fragrant Chicken Bastila" 16:54-57

Mortars & pestles

about 14:44-45
choosing 14:44-45

using 14:45

Mushrooms

about 18:12-14
cleaning 16:72; 18:14

cooking 18:14

duxelles 14:58-59, 14:61

Mushroom Stuffing 14:61

Mushrooms, Asparagus & Sunchoke 15:44-45

seasoning 18:14

types of 18:12-14

soaking 15:28

storing 18:12

Wild Mushroom & Cheese Empanadas 13:60

Mustard

about 16:76-77

in sauces 18:30

making 16:77

types of 16:76-77

N

National Baking Center 18:16
"New Twist on Tamales, A" 17:52-56
Nonstick
baking liners 18:16
pans 18:62-65
"Nougat Glacé"—Cold, Creamy, & Easier than Ice Cream" 15:58-60

Nougatine, making 15:60

Nuts (*see also specific entries*)

Macadamia Trios 13:67

Pecan-Nougat Chocolates 13:66

skinning 17:76

O

Oils

for sautéing vegetables 15:43-44
storing 14:22; 15:28

Olallieberries 15:14

Olive oil 15:20; 16:10

Olives

Chicken with Garlic & Olives 17:50

Green Olives in Wood Ash 14:6

home-cured 14:6

Lamb Loin with Spinach-Merguez Stuffing & Olive-Infused Sauce 16:65

Omelet pans 16:18-20
"One Stock Makes Three Flavorful Fish Stews" 18:56-60
Onions
Butternut Squash Gratin with Onion & Sage 17:44
chopping without tears 13:10; 17:30

Oranges

Caramelized Allspice Oranges & Chocolate Mousse 13:49

Citrus Salsa 18:52

Orange-Basil Sorbet 16:71

Orange-Glazed Carrots with Mint 18:43

Orange Shortbread 14:49

Rhubarb Compote with Oranges & Figs 14:71

Oregano: Long-Cooked Green Beans with Oregano 17:38

Quarka, about 16:56

Ovens, professional style 16:22-24

Oxo Good Grips peeler 14:16

Oxtails

about 17:64-65

Phở 17:66

Oysters

raw 13:14

Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing 18:39

P

Page, David, "Zesty Ketchup from Your Kitchen" 16:52-53

Pancetta 16:72, 17:59

Pans, choosing 18:61-65

Pans for sautéing 15:42-43

Papaya: Tropical Salsa 18:53

Paper vs. plastic 13:4; 16:8

Party planning 14:50-52

Passionfruit

choosing 15:71

freezing 15:71-72

Passionfruit & Citrus Salad 15:72

Passionfruit Pound Cake 15:73

Passionfruit Sorbet 15:72

removing pulp & seeds 15:71

sources for 15:73

Passot, Roland, "Nougat Glacé—Cold, Creamy, & Easier than Ice Cream" 15:58-60

Pasta

Angel Hair Pasta with Mussels & Spicy Tomato Sauce 13:32

Bolognese Borlotti Beans 15:49

choosing for salads 15:46-48

freezing 15:20

Handkerchief pasta

cooking 13:57

filling with herbs 13:55-56

making 13:55-56

rolling 13:56

kneading 15:26

making fresh 15:24

Mushrooms, Asparagus & Sunchoke with Pasta &

Cream 15:44-45

Pasta & Ragi 17:38

reheating 14:20

rolling 15:26

Spicy *Pasta e Fagioli* 15:48

Tuscan White Bean Salad 15:49

Pastry bags, filling 17:30

Peaches

Baked Stuffed Peaches with a Late-Harvest Riesling Sauce 16:51

baking with 16:49

blanching 16:50

choosing 16:49

Peach Tart 16:51

Peaches with Dried-Cherry Shortcake 16:50

peeling 16:50

ripening 16:49

slicing 16:50

Peacock, Scott "Traditional Southern Stuffings" 18:38-39

Pears

Cranberry-Pear Salsa 18:53

Curly Endive with Walnuts, Pears & Goat Cheese 13:37

ripeness 14:8

Pecans

Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 18:39

harvesting & storing 17:10

Pecan-Nougat Chocolates 13:66

Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Cayenne-Toasted Pecans 16:39

Peeling

asparagus 14:72

chiles 16:34

peaches 16:50

Peppercorns, crushing 15:30

Perfect Additions frozen stocks 14:16

"Perfectly Baked Potato, A" 18:54-55

Peterson, James

"Boning, Stuffing & Braising Trout" 14:57-61

"Layering Flavors in a Vegetable Terrine" 15:61-65

Phyllo 16:56

"Pickles by the Pint" 16:58-61

Pickles

Dill Chips 16:61

Garlic-Herb Green Beans 16:61

Pickled Beets with an Orange Accent 16:61

Pickled Chile Peppers 16:61

Pickling 16:59-61

Pie crust 14:12

Pineapple

Grilled Pineapple with Butter-Rum Sauce 16:35

test for ripeness 13:10

Tropical Salsa 18:53

Piper, Odessa, "The Salad in Winter" 13:34-37

Pistachios: Country Pâté with Pistachios 17:61

"Pizza of My Dreams, The" 18:102

Pizza

Grilled Pizza with Tomato-Balsamic Sauce, Chicken & Eggplant 15:57

grilling 15:55-57

Plums: Plum-Raspberry Sorbet 16:71

Poaching fruit for sorbets 16:68

Polenta

about 14:8

firming 14:20

Tri-Color Polenta Cups 14:55

Pork

Artichoke & Sausage Cakes 14:39

bacon 16:72

barbecuing 15:39

butt 15:37

Canadian bacon 16:74

Carolina Barbecued Pork 15:40

1996 INDEX

Pork (*continued*)
Country Pâté with Pistachios 17:61
fat back 16:74
ham hocks 16:74
marinating 15:38
pancetta 16:72
picnic shoulder 15:37
products 16:72
prosciutto 16:74
“pulling” 15:38–39
salt pork 16:74
tenderloin
about 14:27–29
butterflying 14:28
cutting into medallions 14:28
grilling 14:29
Pork Tenderloin with Apple Chutney 14:30
Pork Tenderloin with Cumin-Scented Tomatoes 14:29
Pork Tenderloin with Honey, Mustard & Rosemary 14:30
removing silverskin 14:28
roasting 14:29
sautéing 14:29
seasoning 14:28
slicing 14:28
temperature when done 14:29
trimming 14:28

Pot Pies: Chicken Pot Pie 13:26
Pot-temping chocolate 13:65–66
“Potato Salad Grows Up” 16:36–40
Potato water for pizza 16:26

Potatoes
baking 18:54
boiling 16:38
Catalan Potatoes 14:34
Celery Root & Potato Gratin 17:44
choosing 16:38; 18:54
dressing 16:38
drying boiled 16:38
Mashed Potatoes with Parsley Root 13:43
Potato Salad with Seafood & Sweet Corn 16:40
Roasted New Potato Salad with Dijon & Rosemary 15:40
Roasted Vegetable & Potato Salad with Oregano Relish & Feta 16:39
temperatures for baking 18:55
Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Cayenne-Toasted Pecans 16:39
twice-baked 18:55
varieties for baking 18:54
varieties for salads 16:38

Pots & pans, choosing 18:61–65

Poultry

chicken
boning thighs 17:22
browning 17:49
Chicken & Dumplings 17:51
Chicken Tostada
Pequena 14:56
Chicken with Garlic & Olives 17:50
choosing for fricassées 17:48
Classic Chicken Bastila 16:57
Coq au Vin 17:50
cutting up 17:20
Garlic Roast Chicken 14:34
Grilled Chicken *Salpicón* 16:34
Grilled Pizza with Tomato-Balsamic Sauce, Chicken & Eggplant 15:57

chicken (*continued*)
roasting for pot pie 13:24
stock 17:20
Chicken Pot Pie 13:26

duck
choosing 18:32
cooking tips 13:20
prepping 18:33–35
roasting 18:35–36
sources for 18:32
Roast Duck 18:37
trussing 18:35

goose
choosing 18:32
prepping 18:33–35
Roast Goose 18:37
roasting 18:35–36
sources for 18:32
trussing 18:35

turkey
carving 18:18–20
choosing 18:32
prepping 18:33–35
Roast Turkey 18:37
roasting 18:35–36
sources for 18:32
trussing 18:35

Pounding meat 15:28
Preserving chiles 14:22
Professional-style ranges 16:22–24
Proofing
bread 14:22
yeast 18:70

Prosciutto 16:74
Purslane 14:8
Pyles, Stephan, “A New Twist on Tamales” 17:52–56

Q

Quatre épices 17:58

R

Ranges
gas vs. electric 15:22
professional style 16:22–24

Raspberries
about 15:12
Plum-Raspberry Sorbet 16:71
Raspberry Coulis 15:60
Raspberry-Chambord Sorbet 16:70
Rhubarb-Raspberry Galette 14:70

“Real Way to Read a Recipe, The” 14:90

Recipes, organizing 15:28
“Rediscovering Cocoa” 17:68

Reducing
& deglazing for a *ragù* 17:36–38
cooking liquid for a fricassée 17:49

Refrigerators, about 18:22–28

Rendering

bacon 18:38
fat 16:28
lard 14:42

Rhubarb
about 14:68–70
Apple-Rhubarb Crisp 14:71
baking with 14:70
choosing 14:68–69
field-grown 14:68–69
hothouse 14:68–69
poisonous leaves 14:69
Rhubarb Compote with Oranges & Figs 14:71

Rhubarb (*continued*)

Rhubarb-Ginger Fool 14:70
Rhubarb-Raspberry Galette 14:70
stewing 14:69
storing 14:69

Rice: Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing 18:39

Rice noodles
about 14:72; 17:65
Phở 17:66

“Roasting Your Holiday Bird” 18:32–37

Roasting
chicken & vegetables for chicken
pot pie 13:24

duck 18:35–36

garlic 14:33

goose 18:35–36

lamb loin 16:64–65

nuts 17:76

pork 14:29

pans 18:32

turkey 18:35–36

Rodriguez, Doug, “Savory Latin-American Turnovers” 13:58–61

Rosemary

Grapefruit Upside-Down Cake with Rosemary 13:48
Lemon-Rosemary Sorbet 16:70

Rosemary Flatbread 16:47

Rough Puff Pastry 13:27

Roux 16:12

Rulers 18:30

Rum: Grilled Pineapple with Butter-Rum Sauce 16:35

Rust on baking pans 18:8

S

“Salad in Winter, The” 13:34–37

Salads

Bolognese Borlotti Beans 15:49
Curly Endive with Walnuts, Pears & Goat Cheese 13:37

Fresh Beet Salad 13:41

Italian Bread Salad (*Panzanella*) 15:35

Middle Eastern Bread Salad (*Fattoush*) 15:35

Potato Salad with Seafood & Sweet Corn 16:40

Roasted Vegetable & Potato Salad with Oregano Relish & Feta 16:39

Simple Salad of Watercress, Leek & Fennel 13:37

Spinach Salad with Roasted Sweet Potatoes 13:36

Tiny Potatoes with Bacon & Cayenne-Toasted Pecans 16:39

Turkish Bread & Olive Salad 15:34

Tuscan White Bean Salad 15:49

Winter Squash Slaw 13:37

Salt

for pickling 16:60

in baking 16:10

Salt pork 16:74

Salvaging burned baked goods 18:30

Saucepans 18:64

Sauces, condiments & seasonings

Anchoiade 18:68

Bagna Cauda 18:68

Artichoke Pesto 14:39

Asian Spice Rub 14:65

Sauces, condiments & seasonings (*continued*)

Caesar Salad Dressing 14:34

Carolina Barbecue Sauce 15:39

Chiles Frios (Guacamole in roasted green chiles) 16:34

Grilled *Pico de Gallo* (Chunky vegetable salsa) 16:35

Fruit salsas

Citrus Salsa 18:52

Cranberry-Pear Salsa 18:53

Tropical Salsa 18:53

Herb-Butter Sauce 14:61

Hot Cider-Bacon Vinaigrette 13:36

keeping warm 17:30

Ketchup from “Home” 16:53

Mint & Basil Pesto 16:45

Mushroom Stuffing 14:61

Old-Fashioned Hot Fudge Sauce 17:71

pickles

Dill Chips 16:61

Garlic-Herb Green Beans 16:61

Pickled Beets with an Orange Accent 16:61

Pickled Chile Peppers 16:61

Raspberry Coulis 15:60

Spicy Tomato Sauce 13:32

Tamarind Marinade 14:65

Walnut Oil Vinaigrette 13:37

Sausage: Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster Stuffing 18:39

mergue 16:63

Lamb Loin with Spinach-Merguez Stuffing & Olive-Infused Sauce 16:65

Sauté pans 18:61, 18:63

Sautéing

garlic 14:32

pork 14:29

vegetables 15:42–44

“Savory Latin-American Turnovers” 13:58–61

Scallions, cutting tips 17:30

Scum, skimming 15:20

Semolina about 16:46

Shinn, Barbara, “Zesty Ketchup from Your Kitchen” 16:52–53

Shortbread

about 14:46–48

Classic Scottish 14:48

Ginger 14:49

Hazelnut 14:49

Orange 14:49

Spicy 14:49

Side dishes

Artichoke Gratin 17:44

Artichokes & Fava Beans 14:40

Baked Marinated Eggplant 17:37

Batter-Fried Zucchini & Blossoms 16:45

Braised Escarole with a Parmesan Crust 18:43

Butternut Squash Gratin with Onion & Sage 17:44

Catalan Potatoes 14:34

Celery Root & Potato Gratin 17:44

Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 18:39

Couscous Timbale 16:66

Gingered Zucchini & Carrots 15:45

Green & Wax Beans with Brown Butter 15:45

Long-Cooked Green Beans with Oregano 17:38

Side dishes (continued)
 Mashed Potatoes with Parsley
 Root 13:43
 Mushrooms, Asparagus &
 Sunchokes 15:44
 Orange-Glazed Carrots with
 Mint 18:43
 Overnight Coleslaw with Mustard
 Seed 15:40
 Potato Salad with Seafood &
 Sweet Corn 16:40
 Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster
 Stuffing 18:39
 Roasted Corn 15:40
 Roasted Curried Broccoli &
 Cauliflower 18:43
 Roasted New Potato Salad with
 Dijon & Rosemary 15:40
 Roasted Vegetable & Potato Salad
 with Oregano Relish &
 Feta 16:39
 Tiny Potatoes with Bacon &
 Cayenne-Toasted Pecans 16:39
 Winter Greens with Garlic 13:43
 Winter-Vegetable Braise 18:42
 Zucchini "Noodles" 16:45
 Zucchini-Tomato Fans 16:44
 Silvertown, Nancy, "A Dessert Buffet
 for a Relaxed Party" 18:44-50
 "Simple Method for Tempering
 Chocolate, A" 13:64-67
 Skewer poultry with safety pins 14:20
 Skimming stock 15:20
 Slicing peaches 16:50
 "Slow Cooking Enhances Winter
 Vegetables" 18:40-43
 Slow roasting vegetables 18:42
 Small, Sally, "Taste Summer's
 Sweetness in Peach Desserts"
 16:48-51
 Snover, Dorette E., "Potato Salad
 Grows Up" 16:36-40
 Software reviews 13:6
 Soups, stews & stocks
 Basic Fish Stock 18:59
 Creole Court Bouillon 18:60
 Curried Zucchini Soup 16:44
 Phở 17:66
 Salmon Solianka 18:61
 Seafood Chowder 18:61
 Spicy Pasta e Fagioli 15:48
 Thai Mussel Soup 13:33
 Spatula, oversized 16:16
 Spices
 cooking in oil 14:74
 grinding 14:74
 toasting 14:74
 Spinach
 Lamb Loin with Spinach-Merguez
 Stuffing & Olive-Infused
 Sauce 16:65
 Spinach Salad with Roasted Sweet
 Potatoes 13:36
 "Spring Buffet: Fresh, Light Food for a
 Big Crowd, A" 14:50-56
 Stainless-steel pans 18:61, 18:64
 Star anise 17:65, 17:80
 "Steaming Seafood for Clear, Pure
 Flavors" 15:50-54
 Steaming
 Boston brown bread 13:52
 clams 17:12
 mussels 13:31
 seafood 15:50-53
 tamales 17:54-55

"Stella's Cookies" 13:86
 Stevens, Molly
 "A Perfectly Baked Potato"
 18:54-55
 "Fresh, Briny-Sweet Mussels"
 13:29-33
 Steves, Renie, "Adding Flavor to
 Butter" 13:44-45
 Stewart, Kathleen
 "Bright, Tart Rhubarb Desserts"
 14:66-71
 "Flaky, Buttery Sticky Buns"
 18:70-75
 "Taste Summer's Sweetness in
 Peach Desserts" 16:48-51
 Stir-frying 13:16-17
 Stock
 defatting 15:30
 frozen 14:16
 Stockpots 18:64
 Stoves
 gas vs. electric 15:22
 professional style 16:22-24
 Strawberries
 about 15:12
 Strawberry-Grapefruit Sorbet 16:71
 Stuffing
 Cornbread Pecan Stuffing 18:39
 lamb loin 16:64-65
 prevent scorching 18:30
 Red Rice, Sausage & Oyster
 Stuffing 18:39
 trout 14:58-59, 14:61
 Sugar
 in sorbets 16:69
 superfine 14:46-47
 "Summer Vegetables Make a Swift
 Sauté" 15:42-45
 Sunchokes: Mushrooms, Asparagus
 & Sunchokes 15:44-45
 Sweating vegetables 18:58
 Sweet potatoes
 Spinach Salad with Roasted
 Sweet Potatoes 13:36
 Sweet Potato Tamales 17:56
 "Sweet, Citrusy Passionfruit Accents
 Desserts" 15:70-73

T

Tamales, wrapping 17:54
 Tamarind: Tamarind Marinade 14:65
 Tardi, Alan, "Making Handkerchief
 Pasta" 13:54-57
 Tarragon
 about 15:84
 Leg of Lamb Stuffed with
 Anchovies & Tarragon 18:69
 "Taste Summer's Sweetness in Peach
 Desserts" 16:48-51
 Tasting wine 15:67-69
 Taylor, John Martin, "Genuine
 Southern Biscuits" 14:41-43
 Tea from lemongrass 15:8
 Terrines 15:61; 17:60
 "Tex-Mex Menu from the Grill"
 16:30-35
 Thawing food quickly 16:28
 Thickening a sauce
 by reduction 17:49
 with a liaison 17:50
 with *beurre manié* 17:49
 "Three Hearty Chicken Fricassées"
 17:48-51
 "Three Quick Methods for Pork
 Tenderloin" 14:26-30

Tomato-chicken broth,
 making 15:62-63
 Tomato mousse, making 15:62-63
 Tomatoes
 Braised Beef 17:38
 Carolina Barbecue Sauce 15:39
 for ketchup 16:53
 Grilled *Pico de Gallo* (Chunky
 vegetable salsa) 16:35
 Ketchup from "Home" 16:53
 Pasta & *Ragù* 17:38
 Pork Tenderloin with Cumin-
 Scented Tomatoes 14:29
 Spicy Tomato Sauce 13:32
 Steamed Clams with Garlic
 & Tomato 15:54
 stuffed tips 13:20
 Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto 15:53
 Tomato-Balsamic Sauce, Chicken
 & Eggplant 15:57
 Vegetable & Tomato Mousse
 Terrine 15:65
 Zucchini-Tomato Fans 16:44
 Tortillas by mail 16:16
 "Traditional Southern Italian *Ragù*"
 17:34-39
 "Traditional Southern Stuffings"
 18:38-39
 Tropp, Barbara, "Clean Cuts with
 a Chinese Cleaver" 13:62-63
 Truffle butter 18:16
 Trussing
 poultry 18:35
 stuffed lamb loin 16:64-66
 Turnips, temper with potatoes 13:20
 Twice-baked potatoes 18:55

V

Vanilla, Bourbon 18:10
 Veal: Country Pâté with
 Pistachios 17:61
 Vegetable main dish
 Artichokes & Fava Beans 14:40
 Bolognese Borlotti Beans 15:49
 Mushrooms, Asparagus &
 Sunchokes with Pasta &
 Cream 15:44-45
 Potato Salad with Seafood &
 Sweet Corn 16:40
 Puffy Pancake with Red Pepper
 & Goat Cheese 17:47
 Tuscan White Bean Salad 15:49
 Winter-Vegetable Braise 18:42
 Zucchini "Noodles" 16:45
 Vegetable peeler 14:16
 Vegetable terrines 15:61-65
 Vegetables
 braising 18:41
 cleaning with vinegar 13:20
 deglaizing 18:41
 for sautéing 15:42-44
 freezing tips 13:20
 roasting 18:42
 roasting for chicken pot pie 13:24
 storing 13:72-73
 Vegetable & Tomato Mousse
 Terrine 15:65
 "Vietnam's Classic Soup Is a Whole
 Meal in a Bowl" 17:64
 Vinaigrettes, emulsifying 14:12
 Vinegar
 Carolina Barbecue Sauce 15:39
 for pickling 16:60
 types of 17:74-76
 Vodka in sorbets 16:69

W

Walnuts
 Cocoa Walnut Butter
 Cookies 17:73
 Curly Endive with Walnuts,
 Pears & Goat Cheese 13:37
 Walnut Oil Vinaigrette 13:37
 Waltuck, David, "Stuffing a Loin of
 Lamb" 16:62-66
 Watercress: Simple Salad of
 Watercress, Leek & Fennel 13:37
 Watts vs. Btu 17:6
 Wax
 on organic produce 18:8
 washing from produce 13:10
 Weaving a leek mat 14:54
 Weighing
 dry ingredients 17:62-63
 ingredients 15:10
 Weir, Joanne, "Making Vibrant
 Mediterranean Bread Salads"
 15:32-35
 "What Makes a Good Wine
 Good?" 15:66-69
 Whisking 14:20
 Wilson, Rosina Tinari, "The
 Delicious Pairing of Pasta
 & Beans" 15:46-49
 Wine
 guide 13:14
 recorking 17:32
 pairing with Asian food 14:62-65
 Winter greens & vegetables
 choosing & storing 13:35
 Winter squash
 Butternut Squash Gratin with
 Onion & Sage 17:44
 types of 17:14-16
 Winter Squash Slaw 13:37
 Woks, about 13:16-17
 Woodstove for steaming Boston
 brown bread 15:10
 Wrapping tamales 17:54
 Writing on cakes 14:20

Y

Yeast homemade 14:14
 "Yes, You Can Drink Wine with
 Asian Foods" 14:62-65
 Yogurt making in an ice chest 13:22

Z

Zest, candying 13:48
 Zesting citrus 13:48; 15:28
 "Zesty Ketchup from Your Kitchen"
 16:52-53
 Zucchini
 Batter-Fried Zucchini &
 Blossoms 16:45
 batter-frying 16:43
 choosing 16:42
 Curried Zucchini Soup 16:44
 flowers 16:42
 Gingered Zucchini &
 Carrots 15:45
 grilling 16:43
 roasting 16:43
 sautéing 16:43
 slicing into "noodles" 16:43
 Zucchini "Noodles" 16:45
 Zucchini-Tomato Fans 16:44

The Pizza of My Dreams

I live in a log cabin in the Teton Mountains, which, when winter arrives, means three miles of closed roads and six months on cross-country skis. For the first few weeks, while I get used to the effort for another season, the sudden increase in activity whets my appetite and I eat everything in sight.

I nibble on snacks from my backpack as I make my way across the snow-covered hills. At home I scan cookbooks and read glamorous recipes: Tagliatelli, Asparagus & Peas with Saffron; Potatoes & Chanterelles Baked in Cream; Blackberries with Rose Geranium Leaves. I look for sweet or spicy. Big portions. Lots of potato or pasta or rice. All the rich, fat-filled foods I can't bear to eat in summer.

After ten years of this cycle of skiing and eating, I'm used to this behavior. But dreaming about food was something new. The second week of ski season, I dreamt I visited a luscious gourmet food court the size of a city shopping mall. I ate paella and grilled tuna, chocolate tarts and pumpkin pie. Thai, Ethiopian, Italian. Sushi. And hash browns.

I am a vivid dreamer. My husband often wakes to the sound of my dream talk, turns over, and falls back to sleep. But the night I gorged at the food court, he became restless.

"Wake up," he pleaded. "You're making me hungry. What are you dreaming about?"

"Salmon pizza," I mumbled between dreamy bites.
"Salmon pizza?"

"Mmmm. A thin crust with wheat and a dash of rye. Mushrooms marinated in Sémillon wine. Roasted garlic. Fresh basil. Gruyère cheese and Parmesan. Topped with smoked salmon."

I woke up smiling and somehow satisfied. I ate puffed cereal and skied off to work.

But I couldn't stop thinking about that smoked salmon

The snow kept falling, and as Christmas approached, I searched cookbooks for something special to prepare. My husband was the one who suggested the salmon pizza.

We spent Christmas Eve driving snow-covered roads to a bigger town to find the ingredients. We found Gruyère at one store and Parmesan at another. The salmon took some hunting. We knew

rooms, and sipped the rest. After the crust had baked to a light brown, we layered the cheeses, more basil, mushrooms, and salmon, and slid the pizza into the old Detroit Jewel propane stove. Then we waited.

"Do you think it'll be good?" I wondered. "After all, it was only a dream."

"I watched you devour one in your sleep," my husband said. "It'll be delicious."

In our old log cabin, where chinking has blown loose and left gaps, where the snow blows inside and drifts across the furniture and counters, where salmon and good basil and a hearty wine are things you only dream about in winter, we ate a luxurious, intoxicating meal of two smoked salmon pizzas, stuffing in the last bites with the last sips of wine, while the snow swirled in eddies around the cabin.

—Susan Austin
Teton, Idaho ♦

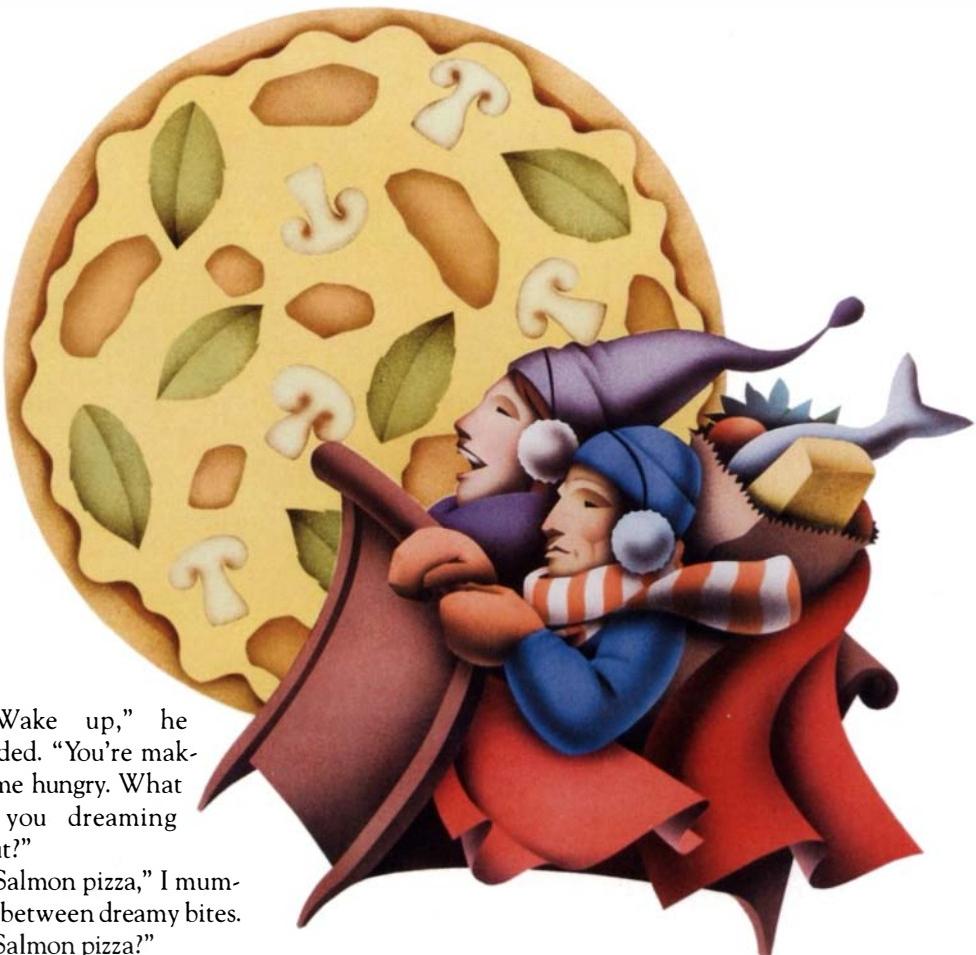
"Wake up," my husband pleaded. "What are you dreaming about?"

"Salmon pizza," I mumbled. "Thin crust."

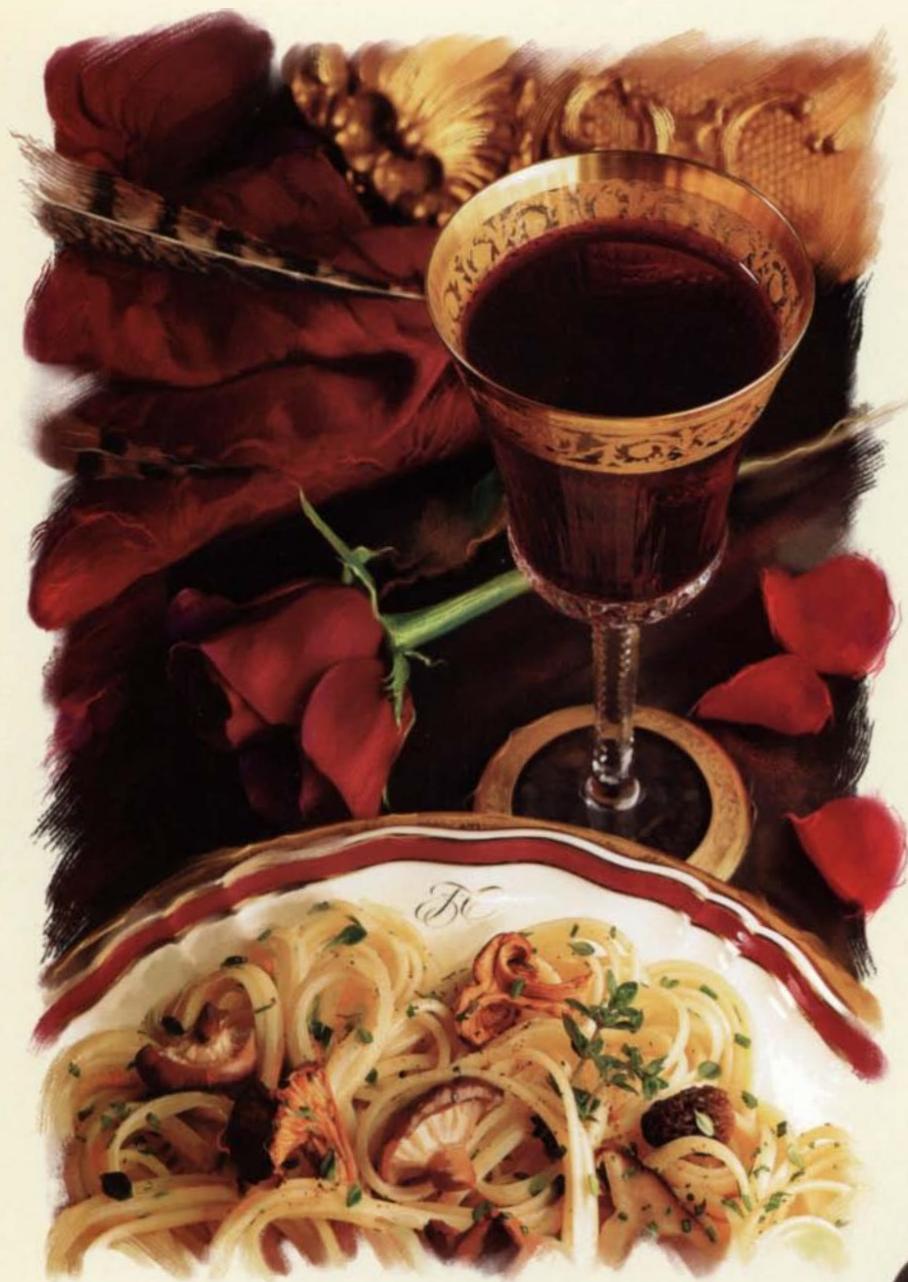
pizza. I'd never eaten a pizza like that before—never even seen one described on a menu or served sizzling hot and pungent to the table next to me at a restaurant. The power of the dream world. Where did the pizza come from? Perhaps it represented all the things that I wanted so badly to eat at the ravenous beginning of winter.

where to find the wine. The fresh basil we plucked from a plant in a friend's greenhouse.

I often experiment when I cook, but concocting something I'd only tasted in my dreams was a new kind of risk. My husband made the crust, kneading basil into the dough. We opened the Sémillon, gave a little to the mush-



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Handcrafting Chocolate Candies

"A lot of the things we do here simply can't be done by machine," says Tom Fegley of Tom & Sally's Handmade Chocolates in Brattleboro, Vermont. While most chocolate makers shape their fillings with an extruder, the Fegleys rely on a technique known as starch casting to make candies with creamy, soft-flowing centers and more delicate chocolate shells. Each mold is made by hand and, since it can be used only once, Tom and Sally prepare fresh castings for each batch of candy. While big candy companies can produce thousands of pounds of candy per day, Tom and Sally make only 100 to 200 pounds a day.



Precise timing and a lot of physical energy are needed to cook perfect cream centers. Fegley stirs a mixture of sugar syrup, fondant, and raspberry preserves and regulates the temperature by moving the copper bowls on and off the gas burner.



Starch-cast molds are filled one by one using a funnel with a simple wooden stopper to control the flow. To make the molds, the Fegleys fill a tray with edible powdered starch and use special plaster molds to stamp out rows of hearts, circles, and squares.



A conveyor belt carries cast raspberry centers under a curtain of perfectly tempered milk chocolate. They come off the belt enrobed in a thin chocolate shell. The centers are firm at first, but they soften to a creamy consistency in seven to ten days.



An assortment of cream-filled chocolates makes a precious gift. Crystallized flowers, espresso beans, and even flakes of edible gold leaf provide a finishing touch to these exquisite old-fashioned candies.

Photo: Susan Kahn



Tom uses a dipping fork to decorate the candies before the chocolate sets. Though it may look easy, mastering the proper flick of the wrist actually takes a great deal of practice.